CAROLS: THEIR ORIGIN IN AND CONNECTION WITH DRAMATIC RITUAL AND FOLKWAYS

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Thesis

CAROLS: THEIR ORIGIN IN AND CONNECTION WITH DRAMATIC RITUAL AND FOLKWAYS

by

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INTRODUCTION

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The increasing popularity in the revival of carolry has aroused a growing interest in its history and origin. For the most part, the few writers on the subject have traced the beginnings from the Middle Ages which saw the rise of carols with the Mystery Plays. Only casual references have been made to the roots found in pagan ritual. The present writer has started with this less known area in order to learn the impulses to carolry from the earliest times. Toward this end a study has been made of ancient festival rites and practices in which there was an association of dance and song for the celebration of new life. It is assumed that caroling has been a natural form of expression in religious festivals common to all peoples, and so this thesis is written in an effort to trace therein its rise and subsequent development in Christian civilization.

Extensive reading has been carried on in the related subject of the Mystery Play which developed from ritual and folkways, and to which carolry was so intimately allied.

Furthermore, many hundreds of carols have been gone over from sources ancient and modern, with significant examples introduced in the text to reflect the period and customs. The music is of equal interest, and one chapter has been devoted to this phase exclusively.

The limits of the thesis do not allow for as comprehensive a treatment as could well be given over a period of years; yet it is hoped the purpose has been realized to some degree. The aim is to trace the origin of carolry from ancient ritual and folkways, thence to its flowering in the Middle Ages, and revival in the present day.

M.J.K.

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE CAROL

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Since earliest times man has caroled forth his joy at the coming of new life. With the resurrection of nature in the blossoming earth, in the soul of man, or in a little child, hidden chords have been touched within the human heart and men have spontaneously given vent to their ecstasy through dance and melody. The carol is the form through which their feelings have been most naturally expressed. It is simple and naive, born of a religious impulse, and in its essence an utterance of pure joy.

Primitive man both danced and sang in recognition of this great Mystery. Wonder at the fruitfulness and barrenness of the recurring seasons gave rise to sacred ritual in which all members of a tribe participated. The elemental urge was the need for food, hence the periodic festivals when nature gave promise of abundance. These might occur at any time of importance to the food-supply, in summer, in winter, at the coming of annual rains, or the regular rising of a river. The rites, that is, something to be done collectively, consisted of dancing accompanied by singing. Nor were they always sacred rites, but often a part of the social ritual, or folkways, which distinguished religious celebrations from the secular.

Even today there are traces of such rites in that remains, for example, of the May-day festival. In The Golden Bough Dr. Frazer tells that the object of carrying in the May was to bring the very spirit of life and greenery into the village. "In Ruhla (Thuringen) as soon as the trees

> begin to be green in spring, the children assemble on a Sunday and go out into the woods, where they choose one of their playmates to be Little Leaf Man. They break branches from the trees and twine them about the child, till only his shoes peep out from the leafy mantle. Holes are made in it for him to see through, and two of the children lead the Little Leaf Man that he may not stumble or fall. Singing and dancing they take him from house to house, asking for gifts of food, such as eggs, cream, sausages, and cakes. Lastly, they sprinkle the Leaf Man with water and feast on the food they have collected." [1]

Other traces of primitive rites are found in far corners of the earth. Many are for the celebration of new life that relates especially to initiation ceremonies when a manchild is born again, as it were. The new birth, is simulated as a death and resurrection. Again, Dr. Frazer tells that in South East Australia certain tribes carry out a strange rite during which a song is sung by novices assembled at the edge of a grave. "An old man dressed in stringy

> bark fiber lies down. He is covered up lightly with sticks and earth, and the grave is smoothed over. The buried man holds in his hand a small bush which seems to be growing from the ground... gradually as the song goes on, the bush begins to quiver, and then to move more and more, and finally the man himself starts up from the grave." [2]

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[1] Frazer, J. G., The Golden Bough, 3rd Ed. Vol. III, pp.80-81
[2] Ibid., 2nd Ed Vol. III, pp. 424-25

Among the ancient cultures of the East, the death-resurrection ritual pattern was woven into the very warp and woof of existence. In Egypt the festival celebrating the rebirth of the god, Osiris, was of foremost importance. It occurred at the time of the rising of the Nile. There were colorful processions with music and dancing. An interesting custom was that of caroling or singing without words, like birds, to the gods. This was adopted by the Greeks, and thence passed into the Christian tradition.[3] Traces of it persist to this day in the florid chants of the Catholic liturgy that abound in exquisite rhapsodies of tone, weaving patterns as delicate as the tracery in an illuminated manuscript. Furthermore, the sequence evolved from this ancient custom, whence sprang one type of carol direct from the Christian Church.

The Egyptian rites found their parallel in those of Babylonia in the celebration of the god, Tammuz, who rose again at the hands of Ishtar, when the rising flood made the desert "blossom as the rose." So, also, in the Semitic culture of Palestine the same myth-ritual pattern existed in the mystery of Attic. Music and dance played an important part in all the festivals, and here the roots giving rise to carolry are to be found.

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[3] Dickinson, Edward, Music in the History of the Western Church, p. 13

Its history is brought a step nearer in a study of the Elusinian mysteries and other secret cults of Greece. These were chiefly for the celebration of new birth. There were "calling up" rites in the spring for the enactment of the uprising of the Earth Spirit. In Greek mythology there is the story of Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, who was carried below the Earth, and rose again year by year. "On

> Greek vase-paintings the scene occurs again and again. A mound of earth is represented, sometimes surmounted by a tree; out of the mound a woman's figure rises; and all about the mound are figures of dancing daemons waiting to welcome her." [4]

At Delphi there were the rites of the Spring-maiden, Charila, when a real woman or puppet was buried and brought up from the ground to enact the coming of new life.

The Dithyramb was still another spring ritual. The word originally meant a leaping, inspired dance. It later became known as a song and dance of the new birth, and this, it is believed, is the nearest approach to the carol in pre-Christian ritual. Dr. Harrison quotes a charming Dithyramb written by Pindar for a Dionysiac festival at Athens. The song is full of the beauty of the springtime and flowers:

> "'Look upon the dance, Olympians;....in sacred Athens come to the holy center-stone. Take your portion of garlands pansy-twined, libations poured from the culling of spring.....

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[4] Harrison, Jane E., Ancient Art and Ritual, p. 78

> 'Come hither to the god with ivy bound, Bromios we mortals name Him, and Him of the mighty Voice.... The clear signs of his Fulfillment are not hidden, whensoever the chamber of the purpled-robed Hours is opened, and nectarious flowers lead in the fragrant spring. Then, then, are flung over the immortal Earth, lovely petals of pansies, and roses are amid our hair; and voices of song are loud among the pipes, the dancing floors are loud with the calling of crowned Semele.'" [5]

(Bromios refers to Dionysus; and Semele, to his mother.)

Plato, in discussing various sorts of odes or songs, says "'Some are prayers to the gods--these are called

> hymns; others of an opposite sort might be called dirges; another sort are paeans, and another--the birth of Dionysus, I suppose--is called Dithyramb.'" [6]

The common usages of Greek poetry testifies to Plato's statement since a poet, when describing the birth of Dionysus, called the god by the title Dithyrambos. The following example is taken from an inscription found at Delphi:

> "'Come, O Dithyrambos, Bacchos, come.
>
> Bromios, come, and coming with thee bring
> Holy hours of thine own holy spring.
>
> All the stars danced for joy. Mirth
> Of mortals hailed thee, Bacchos, at thy birth.'" [7]

The birth mentioned here, did not refer to that of a little child. In festivals celebrating this event, the babe

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[5] Harrison, Jane E., Ancient Art and Ritual, pp. 77-78
[6] Ibid., p. 101
[7] Ibid., p. 102

Dionysus was called "Liknites, 'Him of the Cradle.' The rite of waking up, or bringing to light, the child Liknites was performed each year at Delphi by the holy women. " [8] But as Dionysus, the birth refers to the spiritual birth of the god, a comely youth ariving at the first bloom of manhood. The Dithyramb celebrated the second birth, the Dithyrambos represented the twice-born. Here again is a form of the death-resurrection ritual pattern repeated in ancient Greek civilization.

The Dithyramb was associated with a ritual performed by a chorus. It was a dance that tended to be circular as round some sacred object, a god, his altar, or a maypole. On this dancing place a whole body of worshippers gathered just as Christian peoples gather in a church or on a village green. The rites were celebrated by men and the youthful initiates only, women and children being the spectators. It is interesting that out of this ritual of the Dithyramb Greek drama arose. This, in turn, is the origin of the drama of the Christian Church whence sprang the Mystery plays, an important part in the history of carolry as shown in the next chapter.

The word "chorus" is significant because in it is found the root of the word carol, that is, "chor." The derivation is traced through the old French "Carole" which signified a

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[8] Ibid., p. 103

dance in a ring accompanied by singing. This, again, is traced to the Latin "Choraula", and "the Greek "Choraules", a flute-player for chorus dancing; and ultimately to the "chorus" which was originally a circling dance and the origin of the Attic drama." [9]

Further testimony of this association of carols with dancing is found among certain writers and painters. In the Paradiso (Canto XXIV, V 17) Dante uses the word 'Carola' as meaning a singing dance:

"E come cerchi in tempra d'orinoli
Si giran si che il primo, a chi pon mente
Quieto pare, e l'ultimo che voli:
Cosi quelle carole differente-mente danzando, della sua richezza
Mi si facean stimar, veloci e lente.

And as the wheels in works of horologes
Revolve so that the first to the beholder
Motionless seems, and the last one to fly,
So in like manner did these carols, dancing
In different measure, of their affluence
Give me the gauge, as they were swift or slow."
(Longfellow's translation). [10]

Chaucer in Romaunt of the Rose, writes of seeing a bevy of ladies dancing the "Karolle":

"'Upon the karolle wonder faste
I gan beholde, till atte laste
A lady gan me for to espie,
And she was clepyed Curtesie
Full curtesly she called me;

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[9] Dearmer, Vaughan Williams and Shaw, Oxford Carol Book, p. v.
[10] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 12

"What do you there, beau sire?" quod she
"Come, and if lyke yow
To dauncen, daunceth with us now"
And I, without tarrying
Wente into the Karolyng.'" [11]

The famous Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England, is often called the Giant's Dance or "Carol", probably because the rings of stone appear to resemble dancers. Harding, in his "Chronicles" thus speaks of the Stonehenge: "'Within the Giant's Carole, they so hight, the Stone-hengles that now so named been.'" [12]

Early Italian artists have painted some beautiful examples of caroling angels. A nativity scene by Fra Angelico shows Mary and the Christ child surrounded by a circle of them. Also in his famous painting of the Last Judgment an angelic host has joined hands in a ring-dance amid the flowers of "Paradiso." Again, Botticelli's lovely painting, "The Nativity", portrays most exquisitely the rhythm and poetry of the dance by singing angels.

Even in the present day the combination of dancing with caroling persists among many folk of the Old World and the New. In Bulgaria the "Lazarki", peasant girls dressed in gay costumes and laden with flowers and colored ribbons, dance and sing from house to house to commemorate the

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[11] Oberndorfer, Marx and Anne, Noëls, p. 8
[12] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 13

raising of Lazarus from the dead, a festival ushering in the resurrection season. In Bohemia the hill folk troop down the mountain side at Easter dancing and singing to the accompaniment of tambours and bagpipes. In certain Churches the dance is introduced, as in the Cathedral of Seville in Spain. Three times a year at the great festivals choir boys dance and sing before the altar. Clad in brilliant costumes, they stand in the chancel and sing to the accompaniment of strings and wind instruments; then they dance, bringing the whole to a close with an elaborate fantasy on their castonets.[13] Spanish missionaries carried the custom of dancing in the Church, at Christmas especially, to the New World where it is still in use in Central and South America.

Thus it is, singing and dancing have gone hand in hand since time immemorial. Small wonder they were incorporated into Christian civilization from the start. They were a natural expression for the religious emotion of the people. The death and resurrection of the Christ now served as a fresh stimulus for the ritual pattern which was known to all ancient civilizations. The Roman world was captured by the new spirit, and caroling was destined to break forth in a most glorious form in later centuries for

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[13] Ibid., p. 10

celebrating not only the overcoming of Death, but also the promise of new life in the birth of a little child.

The first Christmas carol to be sung was that of the angels as they appeared to the shepherds by night in Judaea. The joyous song recorded by Luke still echoes down the ages: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of

> great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.
>
> And it shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
>
> Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." [14]

There are some who say this was the first carol acknowledged by the Church. Telephorus, Bishop of Rome, said in his Decretal Epistle in the year 129. "It was ordained that

> in the holy night of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, they do celebrate public church services, and in them solemnly sing the Angel's Hymn, because also the same night he was declared unto the shepherds by an angel, as the truth itself doth witness." [15]

According to French historians, this same Telephorus instituted in the year 129 the custom of celebrating the Nativity with songs of Noël or Christmas carols.

But long before this it may be assumed there was caroling among the Christians. St. Paul, in his letter to the

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[14] Luke 2:10-12, 14.
[15] Duncan, E., <u>The Story of the Carol</u>, p. 11

Ephesians, admonished the people to be filled with the spirit: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."[16] Doubtless, many of these "spiritual songs" were of the nature of carols, joyous melodies of new birth. Joy was the very keynote of the new faith, thus the carol was particularly suited to the Christian genius. Furthermore, singing and making melody in your heart referred to the "gifts of tongues", the glossalalia or caroling without words, a custom among the Greeks and Egyptians as has been mentioned heretofore. A picturesque reference to such rapturous utterance is found in Acts 2: "And there appeared unto them

> (the disciples) tongues parting asunder like fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." [17]

This "gift" was an ecstatic language of joy and thanksgiving and served as the musical impulse out of which Christian folksongs arose during the Apostolic period. Such songs were very simple and direct and many, quite likely, were truly carol-like. It is also probable that in the beginning they were chiefly for the celebration of the resurrection, as it was this event which gave such a powerful impetus to the new religion in the Roman world. The verse beginning:

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[16] Ephesians 5:19.
[17] Acts 2:3-4.

"Awake, thou that sleepest,
And arise from the dead," [18]

was, doubtless, a resurrection carol referring especially, as indicated in the Scriptures, to the spiritual rebirth of the Christians.

Aside from the carols that grew out of the new religion, the carol-spirit was manifest in the pagan folkways of the day. Songs that may be compared to Christmas carols of a secular nature were sung at Roman festivals, such as the Saturnalia marking the turn of the winter solstice; or again in the ceremonies of England that were of Druidical origin with their veneration of the mistletoe. All such festivities, or folkways, had their beginning in primitive ritual in which the "thing to be done" was the dance accompanied by song. It was only natural that these gradually became fused with Christian celebrations. In the Fourth Century the Feast of the Nativity had been fixed by the Church Fathers to correspond with the Saturnalia. The occasion was by no means of a purely religious character. It was marked by universal merrymaking and revelry, including drinking, wearing of disguises, and other carnival adjuncts. Indeed, the abuses were a cause of concern. Gregory Nazianzen (389 A.D.) protested strongly against the worldly character of the festival, and cautioned the observers not to indulge so freely in

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[18] Ephesians 5:14.

dancing and crowning the doors with boughs and evergreens, in heathen fashion. He wanted the feast celebrated after a heavenly rather than an earthly manner.

A carol writer Aurelius Prudentius (348 B.C.) a native of Spain, is sometimes described as the earliest whose work is extant. One of his carols begins:

> "Quid est quod arctum circulum
> Sol jam recurrens deserit,
> Christusne terris nascitur,
> Qui lucis auget tramitem?" [19]

There are twenty-nine stanzas; the tune has not survived. The words indicate that the carol told of the birth of the Christ child, and is thus true to its form of being a song of new birth.

Herein is the distinctive character of the carol. It is first of all a joyous utterance for the celebration of things new. It should not be confused with the hymn which is of a more serious religious character. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, defined the latter as "Praise of God: "

> "'Know you what is a hymn?
> 'Tis singing, with praise of God,
> If you praise God and sing not,
> You utter no hymn.
> If you sing and praise not God, you utter
> no hymn.
> If you praise anything which does not
> appertain to the

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[19] Duncan, E., The Story of the Carol, p. 15

Praise of God, though in singing you praise,
You utter no hymn."-- St. Augustine'"[20]

This is the chief character of a hymn. It is always distinctly religious. It creates a mood of prayer, aspiration, praise. The carol, on the other hand, has a more secular tone. It is a religious expression springing from the common life of the people, sometimes a song and dance that is hilarious. Throughout the ages it has been associated with festivals for the celebration of Life, and as the centuries pass, is to come to its most perfect flowering in Christian civilization.

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[20] Ibid., p. 9

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF CAROLRY AND THE MYSTERY PLAY

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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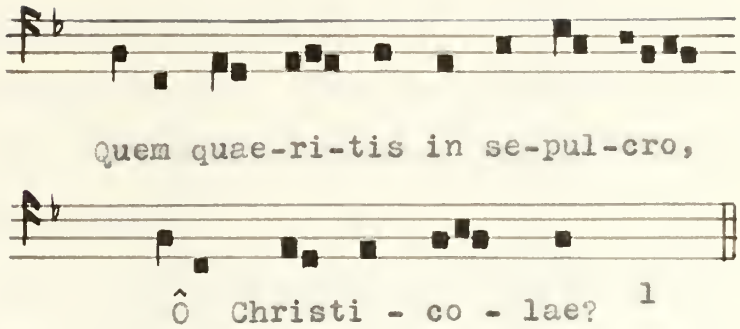
In the Middle Ages carolry arose anew out of Christian ritual and folkways. For some centuries a pall had been cast over the carol-spirit due to the increasingly austere tone of the new Faith. All the joy and gladness that had characterized Christianity in the early years was lost. Spontaneous religious emotion which people expressed through the dance, music, and drama were frowned upon. There was a new philosophy in the denial of this world. Monasticism taught that there was no joy to be felt in earthly existence. Life was to be but endured, and man subject to the most rigid discipline of the spirit and the flesh. All this brought seeming death to the carol.

A change came about with the revival of drama within the Church. The new movement sprang direct from Christian feeling, Christian legend, Scripture, and romance. Strangely enough, the Church which had set about so diligently to crush the mimetic instinct of the people, had in itself become cast in a dramatic mold. The liturgy took on more and more elaborateness until finally, the Mass had evolved into a great and moving spectacle, an epic drama of the soul.

Sound, rhythm, and color were employed in a magnificent synthesis. Special dramatic ritual came to be introduced. The beginning was in the "Depositio crucis" on Good Friday and the "Elevatio crucis" on Easter Sunday, a "Calling up" rite with its parallel in ancient ritual. This was a ceremony in which the dead Christ was buried symbolically and resurrected in three days. Elaborate chanting with allelulias accompanied the rites, sung by the choir antiphonally. Then a new custom arose of inserting melodies at the beginning, the end, and sometimes in the middle of the antiphons. At first these were merely a rhapsodic caroling without words. Later, texts were inserted, called generically 'tropes," or sequences. A young novitiate at St. Gall named Balbulus Notker in the Ninth Century was the originator of the idea. These tropes marked the beginning of some of the most remarkable of the medieval hymns and carols; and in many of them, dramatic action was a part.

Among the most interesting of the tropes were those of the Introit sung by the choir at the beginning of Mass as the celebrant approached the altar. The earliest record extant is one from a St. Gall manuscript of the Ninth Century. This is for Easter and is known as the <u>Quem quaeritis trope</u>:



[1]

It was sung in the form of a dialogue between the three Maries and the angel at the tomb, as told in the Gospels. The action was carried out by four priests wearing white robes. He who represented the angel stood by the altar, or "tomb", and as the "Three Maries" neared the place, chanted:

> "Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, [o] Christicolae?
>
> R [esponsio]:
>
> Jesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o coelicolae
>
> [Angeli:]
>
> Non est hic; surrexit, sicut praedixerat.
> Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro." [2]

and the music burst into a glorification of Allelulias.

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[1] Chambers, E. K., The Mediaeval Stage, Volume I, cover page.
[2] Adams, J. Q., Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, p. 3

Another very early record of a Quem quaeritis comes from the Regularis Concordia of St. Ethelwold in England written between 965-975. This was slightly more elaborate than that from St. Gall, and considered the most dramatic of the early rituals.

The first tropes introducing dramatic action were all for the Easter season since "this was by far the more ancient festival in the Christian Church, and in dramatic significance the subject of the Passion far surpassed that of the Nativity. [3] The death-resurrection ritual struck a deeper note in the hearts of the people than the advent of new birth in the coming of a little child. However, Christmas presentations soon followed those of Easter. In the earliest the "Pastores", or shepherds, took a part, appearing before the altar to inquire of that which had come to pass. Later, the Kings were introduced with Herod and other characters. The momentum was increasing and, having started with a very simple act that was an intimate part of the ritual, gradually evolved into liturgical drama and thence to the Mysteries. Narrative music was a part of all this action, and marked the beginning of carolry within the Church.

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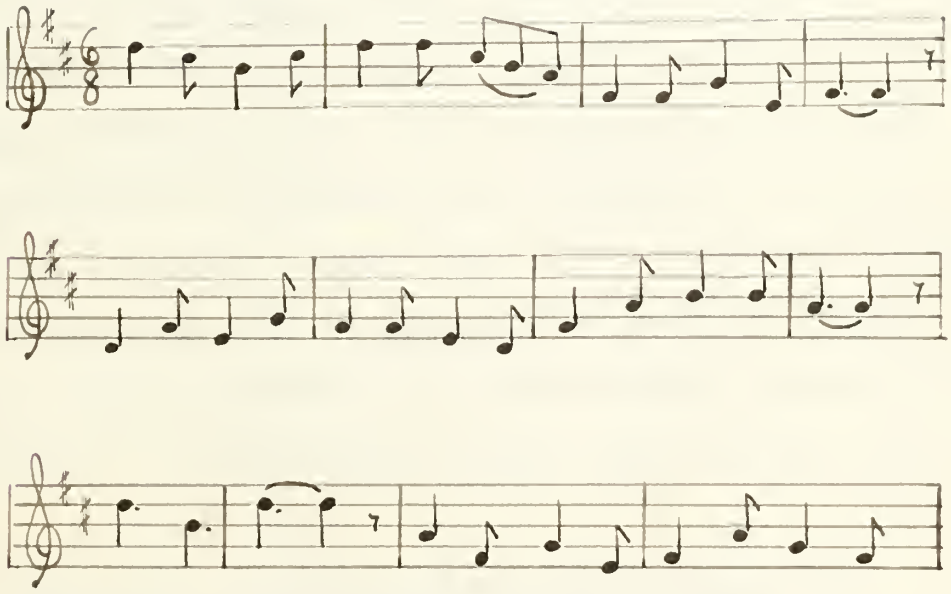
[3] Ward, A. W., History of English Dramatic Literature, Volume I, p. 46

Aside from the religious aspect there was another impulse to carolry in the folk drama, that is, the "ludi" of the village feasts which originated in pagan ritual. These were made up of games, processions, and festivals, great merrymakings with music, pantomime, dancing. The jongleurs, or minstrels, took an active part in such festivities. The secular folk drama like the religious plays arose out of seasonal rites of a death-resurrection character. May-day revels, ploughing, sowing, and harvesting rites were among them. The familiar Maypole dance was derived from a "ronde" a dance of worshippers about a tree. The words of the famous old English carol of the Thirteenth Century, "Sumer is in-cumen in", were doubtless written to accompany a May dance:



Summer is a-coming in;
  Loude sing cuckoo
Groweth seed, and bloweth mead,
  And springeth wood anew.
    Sing cuckoo. [4]

. . . . . .

Another manifestation of folk drama was in the extraordinary burlesques of sacred rites, which made a strong appeal to the Mediaeval mind. Among these were the Feast of the Ass and the Feast of Fools. They were profane "ludi" allowed by the Church at certain seasons as a counter-attraction for the congregation. They were of a most riotous character and developed to a marked degree in France, especially, from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries. The Feast of the Ass was celebrated on New Year's Eve. It was a scandalous burlesque, a veritable satire, of the Church carried on by the minor clergy, including ministrants and choir-clerks. The participants belonged to the peasant and small bourgeois class, and in these rites there was "an ebullition of the natural lout beneath the cassock," [5] a reaction of coarse natures from the restraint of wearisome duties which must be attended for many long hours. Chambers gives a picture of an extraordinary ceremony held at Beauvais: "A pretty girl, with a child in her arms,

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[4] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 67
[5] Chambers, E. K., The Mediaeval Stage, p. 323

> was set upon an ass, to represent the Flight into Egypt. There was a procession from the cathedral to the church of St. Stephen. The ass and its riders were stationed on the gospel side of the altar. A solemn mass was sung, in which Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo ended with a bray. To crown all, the rubrics direct that the celebrant, instead of saying, Ite, missa est, shall bray three times (ter hinhannabit) and that the people shall respond in similar fashion." [6]

At this ceremony, also, the "Prose of the Ass" was used, a carol sung for the processional up the nave:

O-ri-en-tis par-ti-bus ad-uen-ta-uit A-si-nus,

Pul-cher et for-tis-si-mus,sar-ci-nis ap-tis-si-mus [7]

Twelfth Century

There are nine stanzas of which the first and last only are quoted, in translation:

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[6] Ibid., p. 287
[7] Ibid., Volume I, cover page

1. "Out of the regions of the East
The ass arrives, most potent beast,
Piercing our hearts with his pulchritude,
And for our burdens, well endued.
Hey, Sire Asne, come sing and say,
Open your gorgeous mouth and bray:
You shall have hay, your fill alway,
You shall have oats, to boot, to-day!

9. Say Amen, most reverend Ass, (they kneel)
Now your belly's full of grass:
Pray Amen, again, and bray;
Spurn old customs down the way.
Hey va! hey va! hey va! hey!
Open your beautiful mouth and bray;
A bottle o' hay, and the devil to pay,
And oats a-plenty for you, to-day!" [8]

After Mass had been duly celebrated, the clergy and congregation danced around the ass, braying continually. Then there was a recessional, and the remainder of the night was spent abroad in feasting, drinking, and unbridled license. Carols of a very scurrilous character were sung. There was an astounding mixture of the sacred and profane. A somewhat mild example of such burlesque carols is in the following:

"A la venue de Noël
Treize chapons dans la marmite,
Si le potage n'est pas bon,
Nons y mettrons un petit chose.

A la venue de Noël
Tripes de porc sur le gril:

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[8] Gayley, C. M., Plays of Our Forefathers, pp. 37-39

Une bouteille de vin blanc
Pour faire chanter le moine blanc." [9]

An attempt at rhyme in English is illuminating:

"Now is come our feast Noël
Thirteen capons boiling hot,
If the soup doesn't turn out well,
Throw a cabbage in the pot.

Now is come our Noël-tide
For the grill your pork-tripe bring,
If the monk with wine is plied,
Better will he chant and sing." [10]

This was sung to the church tune, 'Jesu! Redemptor omnium.'

Other folk festivals centered around the slaying and bringing to life again a mythological figure mainly described as St. George, a Turkish Knight, Robin Hood, et cetera. The Mummers' play, of a much later date, was a serio-comic survival of the death and resurrection drama, centuring in the killing and restoring to life of the royal hero-god. King George and various opponents were killed or wounded and then restored to life by the Doctor. Carols were a part of all such celebrations, and expressed the festive element as distinguished from the sacred.

Thus far the roots of Mediaeval carolry have been traced in the elaborations of church ritual and in the

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[9] Stainer, Sir John, Carols, English and Foreign, (The Musical Times) p 788
[10] Ibid., p. 788

folkways of the people. The Church gave an outlet to the spirit that was seeking expression in religious carols; and the folk, in those of a secular nature celebrating the gay and mirthful side of life. During this period there had been a gradual blending of pagan and Christian philosophy that finally culminated in the new Humanism. A different attitude toward the world had developed. It was now looked upon as a beautiful and joyful place in which to live. Religion itself had become democratized. In such a setting as this the carol came into its own.

St. Francis of Assisi was the father of the new lyrical beauty in carolry. He introduced into religion a most tender, human note. Through him Christmas bore a fresh significance for the common people, whom he taught to love the Christ Child as their little brother. A charming legend is told of the beloved Saint. He was grieving deeply over the lack of faith in his day. Thus it was in the year 1223, as he happened to be traveling from Rome to Grecia, a tiny Italian village, that an idea came to him of making a little crib to set up in the Church on Christmas eve. It was to be used in a tableau depicting the scene of that holy night in Bethlehem.

> "The population of the neighborhood rose as one man to the call of St. Francis. They gathered round the village Church with tapers and torches, making luminous the December night. The brethren within the Church, and the crowds of the faithful who came and went

> with their lights, in and out of the darkness, poured out their hearts in praises to God." [10]

The friars sang new canticles, and St. Francis stood by "all the night long sighing for joy and filled with unspeakable sweetness." In this humble scene it was as if the Christ Child, dead in the hearts of the people, came to new life, and kindled within them a love long lost.

Here was the beginning of the delightful custom of having a Christmas crêche, or crib, in the churches and homes throughout Christendom. However, it was not the first crib to be set up in a church. A permanent praesepe, or crib, had been in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome since the Eighth Century in which, according to tradition, the birth occurred at Bethlehem. Also, there had been living tableaux many centuries before. "At a very

> early period, certainly already in the Fifth Century, it became usual to animate public worship on special occasions by living pictures of scenes from the Gospel, such as the Adoration of the Magi, the Marriage of Cana, a and the Death of the Savior. Still earlier, great attention seems to have been paid to the antiphonary songs; and when the tableaux were introduced, such songs doubtless accompanied their presentation." [11]

Thus, St. Francis borrowed the idea only, but gave it a freshness and human tenderness which seemed to actually

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[10] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, pp. 2-3.

[11] Ward, A. W., History of English Dramatic Literature, p.34

make the Holy Child live again. He brought to Christmas a poetic meaning hitherto unfelt. It was this spirit that touched the heart and brought carolry to the fore. Thus Italy became the birthplace of a new music that was a supreme manifestation of spiritual ecstasy and joy.

In the poetry of Jacopone da Todi (1228-1306), the Franciscan spirit found its most touching expression. A wild, wandering ascetic, an impassioned poet, and a soaring mystic, Jacopone was one of the greatest of Christian singers, unpolished as his verses were. Noble by birth, he made himself utterly as the common people for whom he piped his rustic notes. 'Dio fatto piccino' ('God made a little thing') was the keynote of his music; the Christ Child was for him 'our sweet little brother'; with tender affection he rejoiced in endearing diminutives--'Bambolino', Piccolino', 'Jesulino'. [12]

He sang of the Nativity with extraordinary realism in the carol:

"Veggiamo il suo Bambino
Gammettare nel fieno,
E le braccia scoperte
Porgere ad ella in seno,
Ed essa lo ricopre
El meglio che può almeno,
Mettendoli la poppa
Entro la sua bocchina.

---

[12] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, p. 39

A la sua man manca,
Cullava lo Bambino,
E con sante carole
Nenciava il suo amor fino...
Gli Angioletti d' intorno
Se ne gian danzando,
Facendo dolci versi
E d' amor favellando." [13]

John Addington Symonds in "The Renaissance in Italy, Italian Literature" gives a most charming translation of this:

"Come and look upon her child
Nestling in the hay!
See his fair arms opened wide,
On her lap to play!
And she tucks him by her side,
Cloaks him as she may!
Gives her paps unto his mouth,
Where his lips are laid.

She with left hand cradling
Rocked and hushed her boy,
And with holy lullabies
Quieted her toy....
Little angels all around
Danced, and carols flung;
Making verselets sweet and true,
Still of love they sung." [14]

There is also an intense sense of the divine, as well as the human, in the Holy Babe:

"Ne la degna stalla del dolce Bambino
Gli Angeli cantano d' intorno al piccolino;
Cantano e gridano gli Angeli diletti,
Tutti riverenti timidi e subietti,
Al Bambolino principe de gli eletti,
Che nudo giace nel pungente spino.

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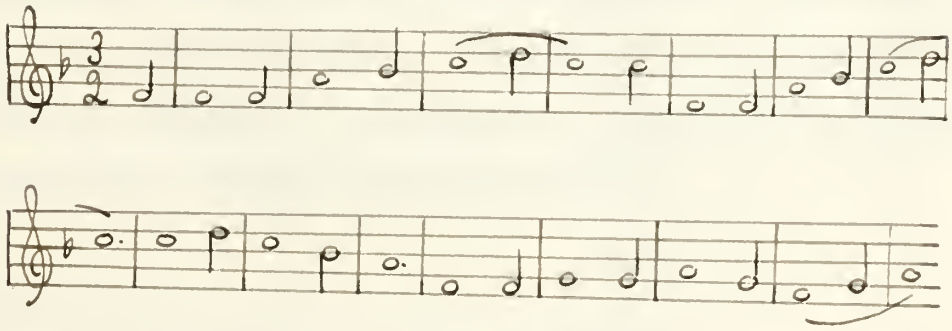
[13] Ibid., pp. 39-40
[14] Ibid., p. 40

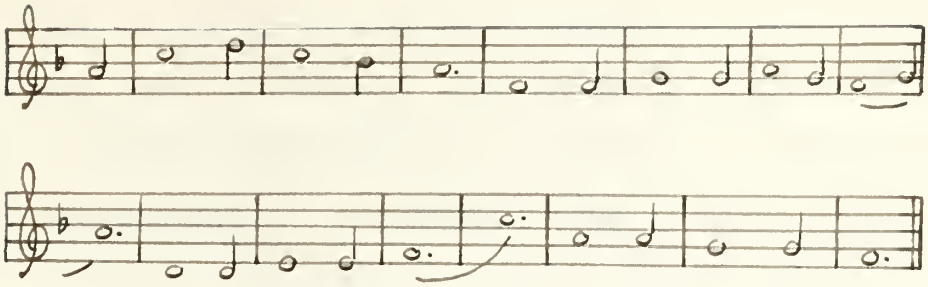
Il Verbo divino, che è sommo sapiente,
In questo dì par che non sappia niente,
Guardal su' l fieno, che gambetta piangente,
Como elli non fusse huomo divino."

"In the worthy stable of the sweet baby the angels are singing round the little one; they sing and cry out, the beloved angels, quite reverent, timid and shy round the little baby Prince of the Elect who lies naked among the prickly hay... The Divine Verb, which is highest knowledge, this day seems as if He knew nothing of anything. Look at Him on the hay, crying and kicking as if He were not at all a divine man." (Translation by Vernon Lee)" [15]

From now on there was a lovely blossoming of Christmas poetry in many lands. In Germany in the Fourteenth Century a writer tells of the mystic Henry Suso who was visited one day by angels that had come to comfort him in his suffering. They took him by the hand and led him to dance, while one began a glad song of the child Jesus. "In dulci Jubilo." This is one of the most delightful of German carols with its interwoven lines of Latin. Singing in the vernacular with Latin interspersed was known as the macaronic style, and characterized many of the early carols.



[15] Ibid., pp. 40-41



In Dulci Jubilo

"In dulci jubilo
   Nun singet und seid froh!
   Unsers Hertzens Wonne liegt
In praesepio,
   Und leuchtet als die Sonne:
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!"

Etc.[16]

"In dulci jubilo
   Now sing with hearts aglow!
   Our delight and pleasure
Lies in praesepio,
   Like sunshine is our treasure
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!"

Etc.

The music has very much the nature of a dance, and unites in a strange fashion religious feeling, playfulness, and ecstatic delight. It contains a reverence and gaiety that completely typify the carol-spirit.

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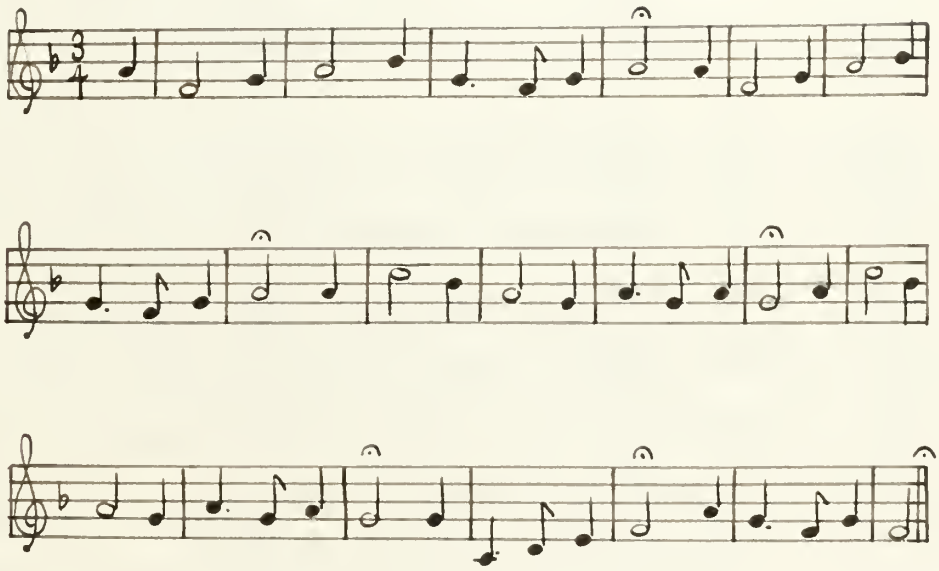
[16] Duncan, E., The Story of the Carol, p. 61

A very interesting German custom in the Fourteenth Century was that of "cradle rocking" in response to the people's longing for a homely presentation of Christianity. "By the Kindelwiegen the lay-folk were brought into most intimate touch with the Christ Child; the crib became a cradle (wiege) that could be rocked, and the worshippers were thus able to express in physical action their devotion to the new-born Babe." [17] At first the rocking was done by the priests, and the choir and people took their part in the singing. Dancing became common around the cradle and in time the people were allowed to rock with their own hands. The following is one of the most beautiful of the old cradle rocking carols:



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17 Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, p. 108

"Lasst uns das Kindlein wiegen,
Das Herz zum Krippelein biegen!
Lasst uns den Geist erfreuen,
Das Kindlein benedeien:
O Jesulein süss! O Jesulein süss!

. . . . . .

Lasst uns sein Händel und Füsse,
Sein feuriges Herzlein grüssen!
Und ihn demütiglish eren
Als unsern Gott und Herren!
O Jesulein süss! O Jesulein süss!" [18]

As the people lulled the little babe to sleep they felt, indeed, that the Christ Child was the universal little brother of all children of earth. A deep and human love entered the heart of country folk, and the once austere Christian religion began to live again and take a vital hold upon the masses of people. This lovable spirit was spread throughout all Europe,and Christianity became a living power once more.

In England the carols of this period were closely associated with the Mystery Plays, especially the four great cycles, those of York, Towneley, Chester, and Coventry. These plays were of mighty range, cosmic cycles, giving a complete history of the world from the Creation to the Day of Judgment. They have never been surpassed in their simple grandeur, crude and naive as they often were. The York and Towneley Mysteries were the oldest, dating from 1340-1350;

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[18] Ibid., p. 109

the Chester, about 1400; and the Coventry, from 1400-1450. They were remarkably popular, and were generally performed in the open air on specially erected stages. The actors were the tradesmen of various Guilds, and assigned to the plays best suited to their business--as for example, the goldsmiths presented The Three Kings; the shipwrights, Noah's Ark.

Carols were an important feature of all the performances. At first, they were sung merely as Intermezzi between the scenes of the Mysteries, but after a time became so popular that there was great rivalry between the actors and the carolers. It is recorded at Chester that "the audience once wrecked the stage and properties and beat the players because they did not get enough carols to please them!" [19] However, these difficulties were overcome and in time the singers were incorporated into the play itself and performed their music on the stage.

This delightfully quaint carol was sung by the shepherds in the Towneley Cycle:

"Primus Pastor

Hail, comly and clene,
Hail, yong child!
Hail, maker, as I meene,
Of a maden so milde!

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[19] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 24

Thou has warëd, I weene,
  The warlo so wilde;
The fals giler of teen,
  Now goes he behilde.
    Lo! he merys,
Lo! he laghës, my sweting.
A welfare meting!
I have holden my heting.
    Have a bob of cherys!

Secundus Pastor.

Hail, sufferan Savioure,
  For thou has us soght!
Hail, frely foyde and floure,
  That all thing has wroght!
Hail, full of favoure,
  That made all of noght!
Hail, I kneel and I cowre.
  A bird have I broght
    To my barne.
Hail, litel tinë mop!
Of oure crede thou art crop;
I wold drink on thy cop,
    Litel day starne.

Tertius Pastor.

Hail, derling dere,
  Full of godhede!
I pray thee be nere
  When that I have nede.
Hail! swete is thy chere;
  My hart woldë blede
To see thee sitt here
  In so poorë wede,
    With no pennys.
Hail! Put forth thy dall!
I bring thee bot a ball;
Have and play thee with all,
    And go to the tenis!" [20]

And one of the loveliest of the Chester carols was the "Lullaby of the Nuns of St. Mary's:"

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[20] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, pp. 136-37

"Qui creavit celum, Lully, lully, lu--
Nascitur in stabulo, By, by, by, by, by--
Rex qui regit seculum, Lully, lully, lu." [21]

The carols were often sung by singers moving at intervals back and forth across the stages, and led by an organist carrying a portable instrument. Sometimes the enthusiasm was so great that the procession of musicians marched into the street, and joined by the audience, paraded about the village singing carols. From this custom it was an easy step to the singing of carols apart from the Mysteries, and by the Fifteenth Century it had become a common practice to sing them alone, without histrionic representation.[22] This brought an ascendancy to the carol as an independent form, and as such, was to reach its height during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.

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[21] Duncan, E., The Story of the Carol, p. 75
[22] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 25

CHAPTER III

THE CAROL AT ITS HEIGHT IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

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The Golden Age of carolry has now been reached when a most exquisite lyricism burst over Europe. Christmas was the most popular theme of the carol writers, and poets everywhere vied with each other in their praise of Mary and the Christ Child. In England, especially, lyrics were scattered abroad like flowers throughout a countryside. Some sang of the Virgin, others of gifts brought by shepherds and kings, still others struck a merry note of festive cheer.

The carols sung to the young mother were among the choicest of this period and none lovelier than those that likened her to a flower, a rose or a lily. The following is a charming specimen of this sort from the Fifteenth Century:

"There is no rose of such virtue
As is the Rose that bare Jesu.
Alleluia.

For in this Rose contained was
Heaven and earth in little space
Res Miranda!

By that Rose we well may see,
There be One God in Persons Three,
Pares forma.

The angels sung the shepherds to
"Gloria in excelsis Deo."
Gaudeamus.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth,
Transeamus."[1]

Sometimes the little Jesus was likened to a flower, also, as in the familiar German carol:

"Es ist Ein 'Ros' Entsprungen."

This is set to a Sixteenth Century melody harmonized by Praetorius in 1609.

Another delightful Fifteenth Century song to the Virgin is that called, "As Dew in April":

I sing of a maid
  That is makeless,
King of all kings
  To her Son she ches.
He came all so still
  Where His mother was,
As dew in April
  That falleth on the grass.
He came all so still
  To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
  That falleth on the flower.
He came all so still
  Where His mother lay
As dew in April
  That falleth on the spray.

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[1] Rickert, Edith, Compiler, Ancient English Christmas Carols, pp. 8-9

Mother and maiden
  Was never none but she;
Well may such a lady
  Godës mother be." [2]

The following is an interesting carol combining Latin and old English. It was written before 1536, and belongs in the group of Nativity carols:

"Gloria Tibi, Domine,
  Qui natur es de virgine!
A little child there is yborn.
Out of Jesse's stock ycorn,
To save all us that were forlorn.
  Gloria Tibi, Domine,
  Qui natus es de virgine!

Jesus that is so full of might
Yborn He was about midnight;
The angels sang with all their might:
  Gloria Tibi, Domine,
  Qui natus es de virgine!"

Etc. [3]

Perhaps the greatest appeal in Christmas poetry is found in the lullabies. A simple and peaceful picture of a mother gently singing to her child stirs the best and tenderest emotions in poets and painters of all times. Carols written around this subject touch most deeply the human side of life, and many of the sweetest lyrics are on this theme. A most musical verse is from one of 1530:

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[2] Ibid., p. 6
[3] Ibid., pp. 42-43

"In a dream late as I lay,
Methought I heard a maiden say
  And speak these words so mild:
'My little son, with thee I play,
And come,' she sang, 'by, lullaby.'
  Thus rockëd she her child.

By-by, lullaby, by-by, lullaby,
  Rockëd I my child.
By-by, by-by, by-by, lullaby,
  Rockëd I my child." [4]

Many of the cradle songs take the form of an imaginary dialogue between the mother and child as in this lovely old English one of the Fifteenth Century. The stanzas are sung alternately by Mother and Son, each ending with the refrain, "Bye-bye, lullay."

"This endernight
I saw a sight,
A star as bright as day;
And listened long
A maiden's song,
'Bye-bye, lully, lullay.'

The lovely lady sat and sang
And to her Child did say:
My Son, my lord, my darling dear,
Why liest thou in hay,
Mine own dear son,
Whence are Thou come?
Art Thou not God alway?
But none the less
I will not cease
To sing Bye-bye, lullay.

Then spake the Child that was so young,
And thus methought He said:
Yea I am known as heaven's King,

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[4] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, p. 51

Though now in crib am laid,
But angels bright round me shall light,
And guard me night and day,
And in that sight thou mayest delight
And sing Bye-bye, lullay."

Etc. [5]

Among the most interesting of the Christmas carols are the pastorals of shepherd life. These are often of a very gay, rustic character, The religious spirit practically vanishes, and the carols become the most naive stories of country folk bringing their gifts. Here is an amusing and jolly English carol that was associated with the Mystery plays:

"The shepherd upon a hill he satt;
He had on him his tabard and his hat,
His tarbox, his pipe, and his flagat;
His name was called Joly Joly Wat,
For he was a gud herdës boy.
Ut hoy!
For in his pipe he made so much joy.

. . . . . .

Whan Wat to Bedlem cum was,
He swet, he had gone faster than a pace;
He found Jesu in a simpell place,
Betwen an ox and an asse.
Ut hoy!
For in his pipe he made so much joy.

'Jesu, I offer to thee here my pipe,
My skirt, my tar-box, and my scripe;
Home to my felowes now will I skipe,

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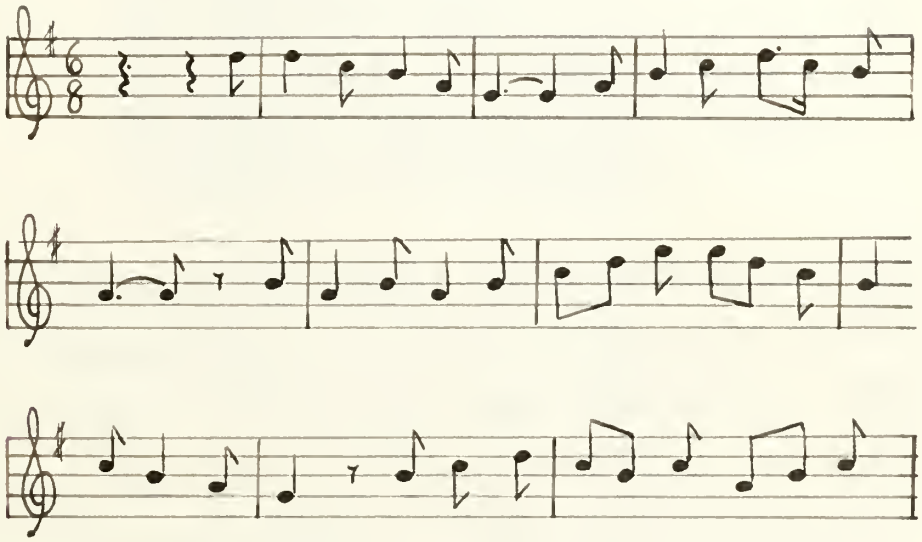
[5] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 72

And also look unto my shepe.'
Ut hoy!
For in his pipe he made so much joy." [6]

In Italy there was an old custom of shepherd bagpipers coming down from the hills to pay their devotions on Christmas eve. The Pifferari, as they were called, came in groups a few days before the holiday to sing throughout the countryside and in homes where friends were gathered about the praesepio. The following is an old bagpipe carol, a true pastoral, in words and music, naive, sweet and tender. It is very familiar to many in the English translation:



"When Christ a Babe was born,
In Bethlehem afar,
The night became as bright as day
In glory of a star.

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[6] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, p. 50

Never at midnight,
Shone such star-light,
All the hosts of heav'n's array,
The brightest star of all,
Away it went to the Orient,
The wise men thence to call.

No wars were wages on earth,
No foes went forth to fight,
No beasts of prey were there to slay
The sheep by day or night.
Safe by the leopard
Wandered the shepherd,
With the bear the flock did play,
The wolf, so savage and wild,
Would not the tender lamb molest,
Nor harm the holy Child.

While shepherds in the fields
Were watching o'er their sheep,
A shining angel came to earth
From heaven's glory deep.
When he beheld them,
Straightway he told them,
Be not afraid, good news I bring,
Be glad and laugh and sing,
The world, to-day, is nearer heaven
A Child is born your King." [7]

The spirit of St. Francis shines through this gentle carol of the bagpipers, especially in the line "Be glad and laugh and sing." It is in the true carol-spirit, which was exemplified with such rare beauty in Italy. It is also interesting that the composer, Handel, when traveling in the Southland, heard this carol sung by the shepherds and was so charmed by the melody that he used it for his great aria, "He shall feed his flock" in the Messiah.

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[7] Meyers and Officer, Folk-Songs of the Four Seasons, p. 57

A most picturesque carol of peasant flavor comes from Spain. It does not actually tell of shepherds, but is rather a story of humble folk who come to Bethlehem bearing gifts:

"Ha nacido en un portal,
Llenito de telarañas,
Entre la mula y el buey
El Redentor de las almas.

. . . .

En el portal de Belen
Hay estrella, sol y luna:
La Virgen y San José
Y el niño que está en la cuna.

En Belen tocan á fuego,
Del portal sale la llama,
Es una estrella del cielo,
Que ha caido entre la paja.

Yo soy un pobre gitano
Que vengo de Egipto aquí,
Y al niño de Dios le traigo
Un gallo quiquiriquí

Yo soy un pobre gallego
Que vengo de la Galicia,
Y al niño de Dios le traigo
Lienzo para una camisa.

Al niño recien nacido
Todos le traen un don;
Yo soy chico y nada tengo;
Le traigo mi corazon."

"In a porch, full of cobwebs, between the mule and the ox, the Savior of souls is born... In the porch at Bethlehem are star, sun, and moon: the Virgin and St. Joseph and the Child who lies in the cradle. In Bethlehem they touch fire, from the porch the flame issues; it is a star of heaven which has fallen into the straw. I am a poor gipsy who come hither from Egypt, and bring to God's Child a cock. I am a poor Galician who come from

> Galicia, and bring to God's Child linen for a shift. To the new-born Child all bring a gift; I am little and have nothing; I bring him my heart."[8]

Star singers were very popular on the continent in the hey-day of carolry. They took part in the Mysteries and colorful processions, symbolizing the coming of the Kings with their gifts. In Germany a custom still survives in Holstein where "three peasants dress in white shirts--one has a black face and carries a fishing rod with a gilt star suspended to it, and they sing a carol beginning:

> 'Wir, Kaspar und Melcher, and Baltser genannt,
> Wir sind die Heiligen drei Konig aus Morgenland.'"[9]

In France, Belgium, and Middle Europe a custom was universally practised of having all the children in a parish march to the crêche set up at the altar of the village church. Three youths who had been especially commended for their scholarship and character were chosen by the priest to represent the three kings of legendary fame. They were dressed in flowing robes, with crowns on their heads, and they proudly marched throughout the town, gathering all the children into their singing band. On arriving at the church, they led the way to the altar cradle

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[8] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, pp. 66-67
[9] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 111

where the Blessed Child lay, and then sang carols before the midnight mass was read. [10]

Many carols arose from this custom, perhaps the best known being the Thirteenth Century air of Provence called the "March of the Kings."

"One fair day
Three kings in bright array
I met upon the high road, proudly riding,
One fair day,
Three mighty kings were they,
With knights and horses all in bright array.
To clear their road
The van-guard strode,
With spear-men soldiers and youthful pages riding,
To clear their road
The van-guard strode
Their golden armor in the sunlight glowed.

In their car,
In splendor like a star,
Were borne three monarchs bright as heav'nly angels,
In their car,
In splendor like a star,
While o'er them flags and pennons fluttered far.
The trumpet's sound
Did publish round
The praise of God and the wonders of His glory,
The trumpet's sound
Did publish round
That now in Bethlehem the Child is found.

On them smiled
At last the Holy Child,
As on their knees they offer prayer and praises,
On them smiled
At last the Holy Child,
Within the gentle arms of Mary mild.
Their gifts they bring
As to a King,

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[10] Oberndorfer, Marx and Anne, Noëls, p. 21

Their gold and incense and fragrant myrrh they offer,
Their gifts they bring
As to a King,
Whose praises all the world shall ever sing." [11]

According to a most charming legend of French origin,

"the Child was sleeping when Gaspar, most magnificent of the Kings, ceremoniously displayed before Him chests of gold, caskets of precious stones and rolls of cloth of gold and royal velvets. From China he had come, bearing sumptuous tokens of the oldest and greatest of the Kingdoms of Earth. But the Child slept on in peaceful slumber.

Melchior next, in white robes, offered frankincense, the symbol of the devout soul. He had come from India, withdrawn, ascetic, cherishing in secret the learning and aspirations of all the ages. But the Child slept on, roused not by the drifting incense and sweet odors. The third of the Kings was the dark-skinned Balthazar, of Africa, a king of barbaric and enslaved peoples who knew neither the pride of power and riches nor the beauty of culture and wisdom. He had nothing in his hand but a little sprig of an herb of bitter scent. Kneeling, he said, 'Little Jesus, whiter and softer than the light, I have nothing to offer thee, nothing save my heart and my tears. Have pity on me, Lord, have pity on my brothers, and for our great sorrow, give us thy love.'

Then the little Jesus wakened and smiled and stretched out His arms in loving response to humble need and the spirit of love." [12]

Many of the most fascinating Christmas carols are those of legend. That of the "cherry-tree" is especially well known. The story is found in the Coventry Mystery-Plays

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[11] Myers and Officer, Folk-Songs of the Four Seasons, p. 67
[12] Ibid., p. 66

of the Fifteenth Century. It is in two parts, the first taking the form of a dialogue between Mary and Joseph when on their way to Bethlehem before the birth of the Savior. As they pass a tree loaded with cherries, Joseph speaks very harshly to Mary when she asks him to pluck some fruit for her.

"Joseph was an old man,
And an old man was he,
When he wedded sweet Mary
In the land of Galilee.

Joseph and Mary walked
Through an orchard good,
Where was berries and cherries
As red as any blood.

Joseph and Mary walked
Through an orchard green,
Where was berries and cherries
As thick as might be seen.

O then bespoke Mary,
So meek and so mild,
"Pluck me one cherry, Joseph,
For I am with child."

O then bespoke Joseph,
With words most unkind,
"Let him pluck thee a cherry
That brought thee with child."

O then bespake the babe
Within his mother's womb,
"Bow down then the tallest tree
For my mother to have some."

Then bowed down the highest tree
Unto his mother's hand.
Then cried she, "See, Joseph,
I have cherries at command."

O then bespake Joseph,
"I have done Mary wrong;
But cheer up, my dearest,
And be not cast down.

O eat your cherries, Mary,
O eat your cherries now,
O eat your cherries, Mary,
That grow upon the bough."

Then Mary plucked a cherry,
As red as the blood;
Then Mary went home
With her heavy load." [13]

A similar fruit-tree legend is known in France, but in this case, it is told of an apple tree.

A very quaint survival has been discovered recently in Kentucky. The story is told in the homely language of the mountaineers of the South. It is interesting to compare it with the old English version whence it sprang. The carol is usually sung to the accompaniment of a dulcimer, so commonly used by the mountain folk.

The Cherry-Tree

"When Joseph was an olden man,
Had lived full many a year, a year,
He courted and wedded the Queen of Heav'n,
And called her his dear.

Then Joseph was a carpenter,
And Mary baked and spun, and spun,
And when 'twas ripe-cherry time again
A family was begun.

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[13] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, pp. 31-33

Then Mary in her meekness,
Then Mary what was mild, so mild,
Said: "Cherries is the bestest thing,
For wimmen bearin' child."

Then up spake Joseph to Mary--
He was a man unkind, unkind--
"Oh, it's who has sired your baby
That's a-botherin' my mind.

"Go tell this one, and straight-way,
That cherries hain't nothin' to me, to me;
If he's e'er a man to sire a child,
He's a man to climb a tree."

Then Mary's Son, our Saviour,
He spake from Mary's heart, her heart:
"I'll make this tree bow low down,
I'll take my mammy's part."

Then the cherry-tree hit bowed low down,
Hit bowed down to the ground, the ground,
And gentle Mary helped herself
To cherries without a sound.

Then Joseph said in terror:
"I see my wrong is great, is great,
Pray come, my gentle Queen of Heav'n,
The secret do relate."

Then said the Virgin Mary,
"The secret I will share, will share:
On Christmas Eve, in a ox's stall,
The Christ-Child I will bear." [14]

Other amusing legends are told of the cock that crowed on the night Christ was born. One tells of King Pharaoh who refused to believe the story of the wondrous star related by his wise men, until the roasted cock on his table arose and crowed three times. "There are several carols in which

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[14] Niles, John Jacob, Editor, Ten Christmas Carols, p. 17

mention of this cock legend is to be found, but "The Miracle of the Cock" is probably one of the most unusual of this type. It comes from Sussex, England, where it is sung by the gypsies every Christmas time:" [15]

"King Pharoah sat amusing
Amusing all alone,
There came the blessed Saviour,
Though all to him unknown.

Say where did you come from, my good man?
Where did you then pass?
It is out of Egypt,
Between an ox and ass.

And if the news be true, good man,
That you are telling me,
Make this roasted cock to crow three times,
In the dish where here we see.

Oh, it's straight away the cock did rise,
All feathered to the hand,
Three times the roasted cock did crow,
On the dish where it did stand." [16]

Still other interesting legends refer to the Christmas ship. In sea-going lands, three ships took the place of the camels bearing the wise men. The most famous of these carols is that from England telling of Mary and her Son being borne across the sea. It is probably of Fifteenth Century origin:

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[15] Oberndorfer, Marx and Anne, Noëls, p. 27
[16] Ibid., No. 93

"I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day in the morning.

And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And who was in those ships all three
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his Ladye,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Our Saviour Christ and his Ladye,
On Christmas Day in the morning." [17]

Etc.

The secular carols of festivity and cheer were especially popular in England. The season was the occasion of great merry making. The halls were decked with greens, the Yule log brought in, the wassail bowl filled to over-flowing. Christmas waits wandered about singing carols everywhere. Songs of all these festive customs abound, and are very familiar in the present day.

On the Continent there were many charming carols of custom. The well-known French Noël "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella" is particularly vivid in its depicting of a Christmas eve scene in southern France of long ago. This is a great favorite in America as well as in Europe, to-day:

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[17] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 48

"Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabella,
Bring a torch, to the Manger run!
It is Jesus, good folk of the village,
Christ is born, and Mary's calling,
Ah! Ah! beautiful is the Mother,
Ah! Ah! beautiful is her Son.

Bright the heavens where stars are shining,
Clear the night, there is not a cloud.
Now jump out of your beds, my dear children,
Haste to see your little Brother,
Quick! Quick! into the starry night.

Who is this that's knocking so loudly?
Who comes pounding upon my door?
Open quickly, I'm bringing a platter
Piled with cakes and Christmas dainties,
Knock! Knock! open so I may enter,
Knock! Knock! festive we all shall be.

It is wrong, the Baby is sleeping,
It is wrong to be talking so loud;
Silence all, as you gather around Him,
Lest your voices waken Jesus!
Hush! Hush! see, He is lost in slumber,
Hush! Hush! see, He is lost in sleep!

Softly, softly come to the stable,
Softly just for a moment come.
See how lovely the Child in the Manger,
Like a star of heaven shining!
Hush! Hush! see, how He smiles in slumber,
Hush! Hush! see, how He smiles in dreams." [18]

In Czecho-Slovakia there was a custom of carrying a little Bethlehem scene about the streets set up on a tray. Children enjoyed giving presents to the Christ Child cradled there. One of the sweetest of all children's carols tells of a little Czech boy who gave his two most

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[18] Meyers and Officer, Folk-Songs of the Four Seasons, p. 63

precious toys to his 'little brother.'

"In Bethlehem, I would be,
Child Jesus there to see;
Toys I would bring Him for His play,
My cuckoo and my canary gay,
These would I give to Him.

This little cuckoo toy
Will bring Child Jesus joy,
It will sit His cradle nigh,
And will "Cuckoo, Cuckoo," sweetly cry
"Cuckoo, Cuckoo,"--"Cuckoo, Cuckoo,"
Joy to Thee, Jesus.

And my canary too,
Will bring Him pleasure new,
It will flutter softly by His head,
Singing sweetly o'er His lowly bed,
Singing, as 'twould say,
Ah, were I in heav'n today. [19]

The Christmas tree was of very early origin. Virgil told of a magical fairy tree hung with toys. The tree took its place in German Christmas festivities at the time of Martin Luther, and from there the custom passed into other lands.

There is a charming folk tale that is still told to children of a German forester "who on Christmas eve had

> bolted his door, and was seated at his fireside with his family around him. On hearing a faint knocking, he opened the door and found a little child, half frozen, lying in the snow at the door. He took the child within, warmed and fed it, and tiny Hans, his son, gave up his own bed

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[19] Ibid., pp. 59-61

to the little stranger. The next morning the family was awakened by the singing of a band of angels, and they found that their unbidden guest was surrounded by a Divine radiance. He appeared before them as the Heaven-sent Christ Child, and breaking a branch from the fir tree beside the door, he set it in the earth and said: "I have been warmed and fed by you; this is my gift in return. This tree will evermore bear its fruit on my birthday, and you will have abundance throughout the year." [20]

The following carol tells of this miraculous visit of the Christ Child:

"Ev'ry year at Christmas,
Comes the Christ-child small,
From His blessed home above,
Bringing joy to all.

Enters with His blessing,
Into each one's home,
Guarding ev'ry step we take,
As we go or come.

He is always with us,
Quiet, still, He stands,
He will ever lead us on,
With His loving hands." [21]

With the coming of Spring, birds and flowers, beasts and men have ever felt the stir of new life within. The resurrection in nature and in man has been the inspiration of many of the most beautiful Easter carols. They sing exultantly of the great mystery of Life, its victory over death.

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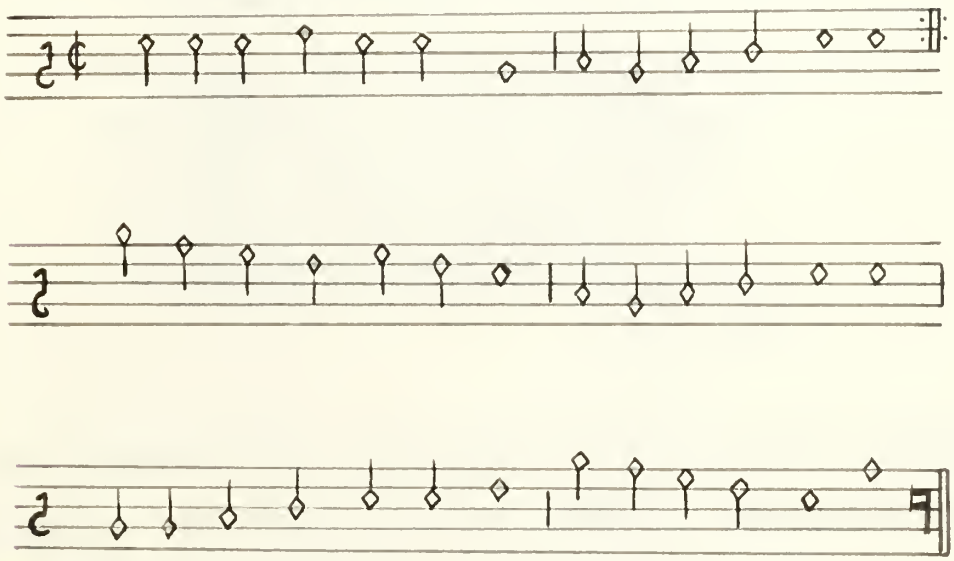
[20] Oberndorfer, Marx and Anne, Noëls, p. 31
[21] Ibid., No. 104

A number of the early Springtime carols are found in the collection, Piae Cantiones, published in Sweden in 1582. The most familiar, perhaps, is "Tempus adest floridum" set to a delightful Thirteenth Century melody. This melody, is better known to-day as accompanying the Christmas carol, Good King Wenceslas, written by Neale. Rightfully, it belongs to the following words, a spring carol:



"Tempus adest floridum, surgent namque flores
Vernoles in omnibus, immitantur mores,
Hoc quod frigus laeserat, reparant calores,
Cernimus hoc fieri, permultos labores.

Prata plena floribus jucunda aspectu,
Ubi juvat cernere herbas cum delectu
Gramina et plantae quae hyeme quiescunt,
Vernali in tempore vivunt et accrescunt." [22]

In the English translation it is known as the Flower Carol:

"Spring has now unwrapped the flowers,
Day is fast reviving,
Life in all her growing powers,
Towards the light is striving:
Gave the iron touch of cold,
Winter time and frost time,
Seedlings, working through the mould,
Now make up for lost time.

Herb and plant that, winter long,
Slumbered at their leisure,
Now bestirring, green and strong,
Find in growth their pleasure:
All the world with beauty fills,
Gold the green enhancing;
Flowers make glee among the hills,
And set the meadows dancing."

Etc. [23]

Another from this collection is "Ye heav'ns, uplift your voice." The words are from Daniel's Thesaurus Hymnologicus, XIV or XV Century, to the melody of O mentes perfidas (in the Dorian Mode). It brings a charming picture of spring:

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[22] Piae Cantiones, pp. 87-88
[23] Dearmer, Vaughan Williams, and Shaw, The Oxford Book of Carols, No. 99

"Ye heav'ns, uplift your voice;
Sun, moon, and stars, rejoice;
And thou, too, nether earth,
Join in the common mirth:
For winter storm at last,
And rain is overpast:
Instead whereof the green
And fruitful palm is seen.

Ye flow'rs of spring, appear;
Your gentle heads uprear,
And let the growing seed
Enamel lawn and mead.
Ye roses, inter-set
With clumps of violet,
Ye lilies white, unfold
In beds of marygold."

Etc. [24]

From the resurrection in nature man's thought turns quite naturally to the spiritual resurrection so gloriously exemplified in the risen Christ. There are innumerable carols that tell of his rebirth. From Germany of the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Century comes:

"We will be merry, far and wide,
In this most holy Easter-tide:
Our life we owe to Him who died.
Alleluya.

Now Christ is ris'n, to die no more,
Death on the Cross Who nobly bore;
Him therefore bless we evermore.
Alleluya.

. . . . .

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[24] Woodward, George Ratcliffe, Compiler, The Cowley Carol Book, First Series, No. 59

Praise, honour, laud to Christ be done,
The Father's only, sinless Son,
Who Paradise for man re-won.
Alleluya.

Good Christen people, sing for glee,
And praise the Holy Trinity,
From age to age eternally,
Alleluya." [25]

A somewhat later carol is "The World Itself is Blithe and Gay" with the words and melody from the Kolnisches Gesangbuch:

"The world itself is blithe and gay, Alleluya,
And keeps with Jesus Easter-day, Alleluya.

The skies with Angel-musick ring, Alleluya;
While holy Church on earth doth sing Alleluya.

Our fields are deckt in vernal hue, Alleluya;
The trees begin to bloom anew. Alleluya.

Hark! birds are singing, far and near, Alleluya,
The nightingale 'tis joy to hear. Alleluya.

Now sunbeams daily stronger grow, Alleluya,
And lend the earth a brighter glow. Alleluya.

The world itself is blithe and gay, Alleluya,
And keeps with Jesus Easter-day. Alleluya." [26]

There were many interesting signs and observances surrounding the Easter festival; as for example, Easter laughter, Easter-eggs, and Easter fires. Everyone was

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[25] Ibid., No. 61
[26] Ibid., No. 60

expected to be in a merry mood and enjoy to the utmost games, dance, and song. The Church itself entered into the spirit gaily. Sometimes the solemn clergy lent aid by exciting the "risus Paschalis", or "Easter smile", with funny stories during a service. Even the sun was believed to join in the general felicity by dancing in the heavens. In some parts of England the sun dancing was called "lamb playing", and on Easter morning village girls got up early to watch it and also try to discover the lamb and a flag in the center of the sun disk. [27]

Among Slavic peoples especially the day was one of great rejoicing. It was filled with hope, brightness, warmth. In the isolated villages a new spirit seemed to spring up. Lack of comforts often made Christmas a less joyful festival, whereas Easter was the occasion of great merry-making. An elaborate Church ceremony ushered in the day. On Good Friday evening a rite took place--the opening of the sepulchre. Everyone marched in a burial processional when a large ikon was taken from the Holy of holies. This was buried to the accompaniment of a beautiful song about Joseph of Arimathea. Then the ikon was dug up and carried back to the Church, where it was put into the sepulchre surrounded with roses and lilies. On great Saturday

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[27] Schauffler, R. H. Editor, Easter, pp. xiii-xiv

everyone rose before dawn to attend Church laden with flowers. Upon returning home, the remainder of the day was spent in coloring quantities of eggs. The festival opened formally at midnight with a brilliant service. There was another procession, and as the priest cried out, "Christ is risen!" the people answered, "He is risen, indeed!" Thereafter for many days this was the proper salutation with which to greet old and young.

The home festivities were numerous. The priest visited every cottage in order to bestow a blessing. There was much visiting for days. People exchanged gifts, especially Easter eggs. They ate and drank together, saluting with a kiss and the usual greeting, "Christ is risen!" [28] There was a delightful hospitality manifest everywhere. A curious traditional carol called "Easter Eggs" reflects the spirit of the season interestingly:

"Easter eggs! Easter eggs! Give to him
that begs!
For Christ the Lord is arisen.

To the poor, open door, something give from
your store!
For Christ the Lord is arisen.

Those who hoard can't afford--moth and rust
their reward!
For Christ the Lord is arisen.

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[28] Fetler, B., "Easter in Russia" from
The Stundist in Siberian Exile, pp. 96-100

Those who love freely give--long and well
may they live!
For Christ the Lord is arisen.

Easter-tide like a bride, comes, and won't
be denied.
For Christ the Lord is arisen." [29]

In many parts of Europe caroling at Easter was carried on much after the fashion of Christmas. Processions of young men and girls, laden with flowers, were seen in the villages dancing and singing, on Easter eve. In the Tyrol the custom still persists of carolers going about singing with guitars for accompaniment. They call people out to their doors and bid them join in the chorus. The hosts of the homes where they sing shower them with presents, gaily colored eggs and goodies in return for their carols. There is laughter and good cheer everywhere. [30]

The ancient custom of lighting Easter fires on the mountain peaks is still retained by certain peasant hill folk. The fire symbolizes the triumph of Spring over Winter. The Roman Church adopted this idea by introducing an elaborate illumination at Easter to signify the reappearance of the Light of the World from the tomb of death. [31]

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[29] Dearmer, Vaughan Williams and Shaw, The Oxford Book of Carols, No. 94
[30] Schauffler, Robert H., Editor, Easter, p. 16
[31] Ibid., pp. xviii and xix

Carols of the May belong to the later Springtime season. They, too, sing of the fresh beauty of the earth, the flowers, and all growing things. May Day, or "Green Holiday", as often called, was a festival belonging to the history and legends of many lands. Differing in details, they were alike in the custom of bringing treasures of the wood and fields to deck the homes. In far northern villages of Scandinavia and in little towns of Italy, in the Hebridean Isles, across England and throughout Brittany, May Day meant, traditionally, one and the same thing.

The chief custom was to uproot a young living tree at sunrise and plant it by the cottage door. A branch or handful of blossoms, also gathered at dawn, had to be hung over doorways or windows. Tree, branch, and blossom came to be called "The May", both in Latin and northern countries. May morning was the occasion of making offerings of "The May" to sweethearts and friends. Among certain Alpine villages the gift consisted of a stately evergreen tree. With others, there was an exchange of flowers, especially cowslips and violets. [32] The pretty custom among children of exchanging May baskets is a relic of these old practices.

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[32] Meyers and Officer, Folk-Songs of the Four Seasons, p.2

Many delightful carols tell of the customs. A favorite in England is "May-Day Garland":

"I've brought you here a bunch of May!
Before your door it stands:
It's well set out, and well spread about,
By the work of our Lord's hands:

This morning is the first of May,
The primest of the year:
So ladies all, both great and small,
I wish you a joyful cheer."

Etc. [33]

Another well-known example is "The Furry Day Carol" with a happy little tune that trips along very gaily. It has a strong folk-song character:

"Remember us poor Mayers all!
And thus we do begin-a
To lead our lives in righteousness,
Or else we die in sin-a:

Refrain
With Holan-to, sing merry, O,
With Holan-to, sing merry,
with Holan-to, sing merry, O,
With Holan-to sing merry!

We have been rambling half the night,
And almost all the day-a,
And now, returned back again,
We've brought you a branch of May-a:

Then let us all most merry be,
And sing with cheerful voice-a;
For we have good occasion now
This time for to rejoice-a:" [34]

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[33] Dearmer, Vaughan Williams and Shaw, Oxford Carol Book, No. 48
[34] Ibid., No. 49

"Robin Hood and Little John" is a charming dance carol. The tune is an English Morris dance, believed to be of Moorish origin brought to England by the returning Crusaders. Bells were used lavishly, for they held a deep meaning for May-Day. They were supposed to be heard by the seeds and roots stirring into life, thus giving encouragement to living things in their struggle to come forth out of the dark earth. Usually the dancers were nine, the leader or Lord of the May being most gorgeously apparelled in gold lace and feathers. This troop of dancers went rollicking through the lanes, in and out of houses, and added much to the merriment of an English May Day. After the Fifteenth Century the Morris dance became identified with the Robin Hood characters; hence the name of the song: [35]

"Oh, Robin Hood and Little John,
They both are gone a-hunting O,
And we will to the greenwood go,
To join them in a hunting O.

Refrain
Then off to chase the buck and doe,
To chase the buck and doe,
O, Then off to chase the buck and doe,
With branch of May, sing merry O.

Oh, we were up as soon as day,
To fetch the summer home O,
The summer is a-coming in,
And winter is a-gone O." [36]

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[35] Meyers and Officer, Folk-Songs of the Four Seasons, p. 4
[36] Ibid., p. 5

An old custom still prevails in France of singing in the open on May Day. Troops of boys and girls may be seen wandering about the country caroling joyfully. When they call at various homes, they receive gifts for their songs. The following is a pretty specimen from the French Alps:

"Month of May, merry May,
'Tis the blithesome month of May!

We wandered through the fields this morn,
Behold the grain is grown so high!
The days of Spring must now be nigh!
Praise the Lord!

A little flour of you we ask;
We beg a morsel for the poor
To leave this day before their door;
Praise the Lord!

We thank you, Madam, one and all!
We ask of God that blessings fair
Upon you fall, for gifts so rare!
Praise the Lord!" [37]

This delightful and widespread lyricism on themes of Christmas and Springtime continued to flourish into the Seventeenth Century till crushed by the onslaught of Puritanism. Beginning in 1644 in England the people had to keep Christmas as a fast day; hence all festivities and caroling were unlawful. The spirit died. Nor could it be revived in the days of the Restoration. All the beauty

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[37] Marzo, Eduardo, Editor, Fifty Carols of all Nations, p. 76

and charm of the earlier period were lost. The carols that had been so beloved and widely sung now lived in the memory of the people only. This decline was due in part, also, to the rise of music in the more highly developed contrapuntal style. Sacred motets and madrigals were captivating Europe. Even these were soon to be supplanted by music in larger forms. Thus carolry was overshadowed completely; but, in the latter half of the Ninteenth Century was destined to be re-born.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSIC OF THE CAROLS

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The music of the carols throughout was very interesting in its variety. There was no "proper" tune, so called. The words were set to any melody that fitted. It might be religious or secular, folksong or a composed form. Sometimes there was more than one tune to a carol, as for example, "God rest you Merry, Gentlemen." One distinguishing characteristic was that a melody, from whatever source derived, generally had the stamp of the nation which used it. French tunes were very bright and lively; German tunes, somewhat slower and sentimental; the English, quite rollicking and suggesting gaiety on a village green.

Many of the oldest tunes were written in the Modal scales of Greek origin. These scales are known as the Gregorian modes that were adopted by the Early Church. The following table shows their progression with semitones:

D E F G A B C D	called the	Dorian Mode
E F G A B C D E	"	Phrygian
F G A B C D E F	"	Lydian

G A B C D E F G	called the	Mixo lydian
A B C D E F G A	"	Aeolian
B C D E F G A B	"	Locrian
C D E F G A B C	"	Ionian [1]

The Ionian Mode will be recognized as the familiar C major scale in common use; and the Aeolian, the primitive, relative minor form. The remaining modes have that archaic flavor which gives such charm to the old carols.

Much of the music of the carols was a natural development from the hymns and sequences of the church service. The tunes were generally transmitted aurally, and in the course of time changed so much as to be entirely altered in time, tune, and character. Sir John Stainer, in a lecture at Oxford in 1890 said, "Ancient church melodies were sometimes put through a curious process of transformation in order to make them suitable, or perhaps I should say lively enough for carols." [2] An example is in the fine old melody, "Conditor alme siderum:"

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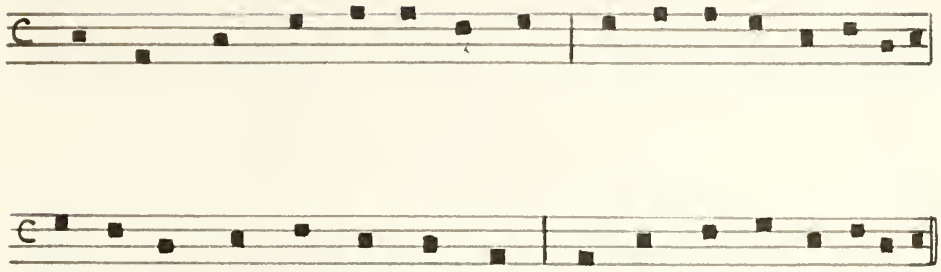
[1] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 125

[2] Stainer, Sir John, Carols, English and Foreign, (The Musical Times) p. 788



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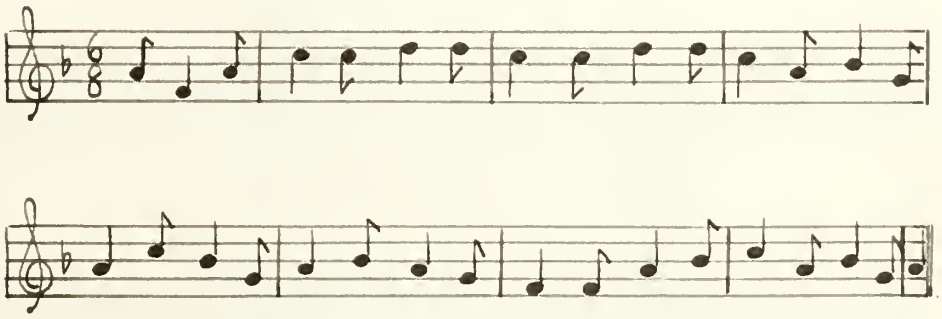
"here is a popular version of the tune as sung to a Noël in France, and in Flanders, too:--"



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Among other hymn tunes which underwent a change were "Jesu! Redemptor omnium" and "Veni Creator."

Many of the old tunes were of the folksong order, popular melodies of the times. Such was "Noël de Cour" sung to the words "Tous les bourgeois de Chartres:"

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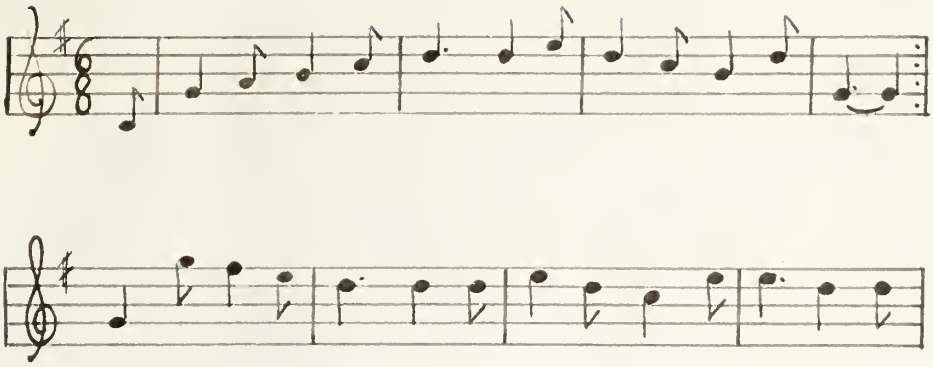
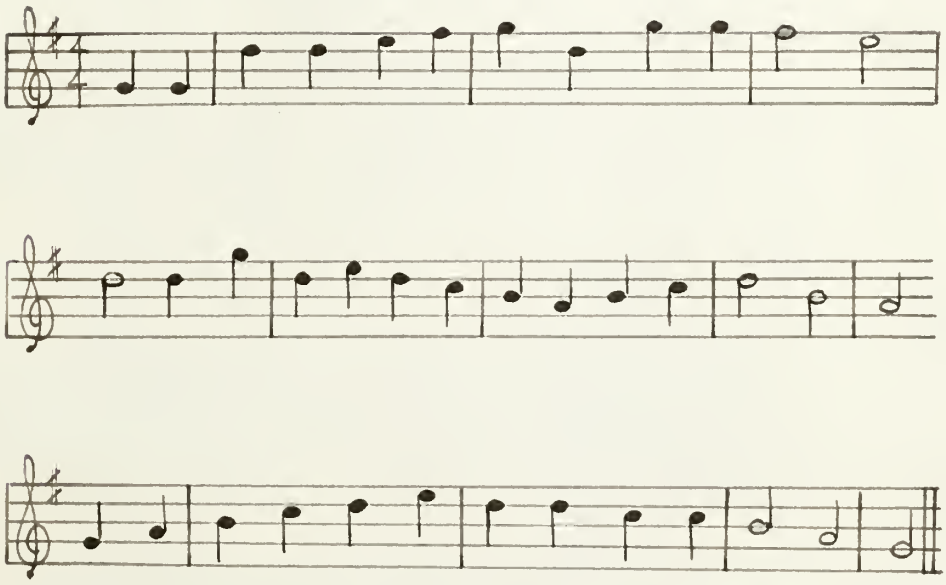
[3] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 129

[4] Ibid., p. 130



[5]

Another, the Besançon carol, "Shepherds Shake off your Drowsy Sleep." The original was as follows:



and in the final development evolved into:

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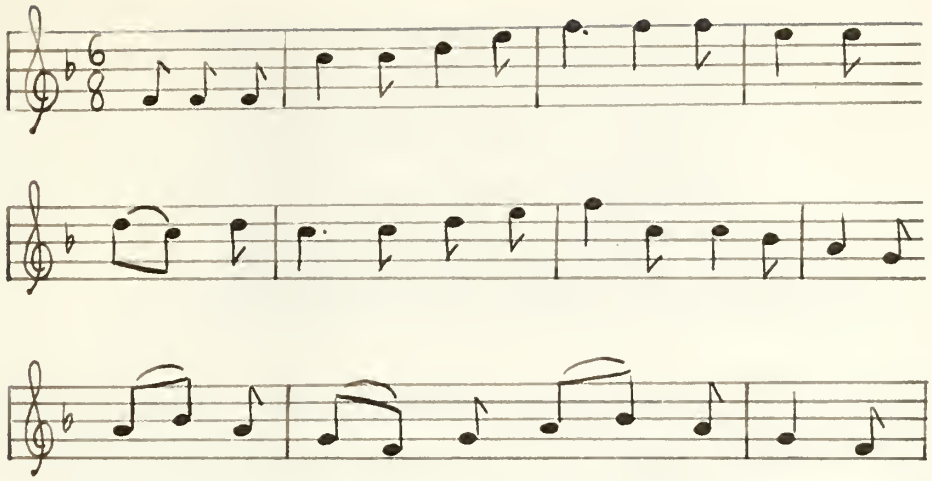
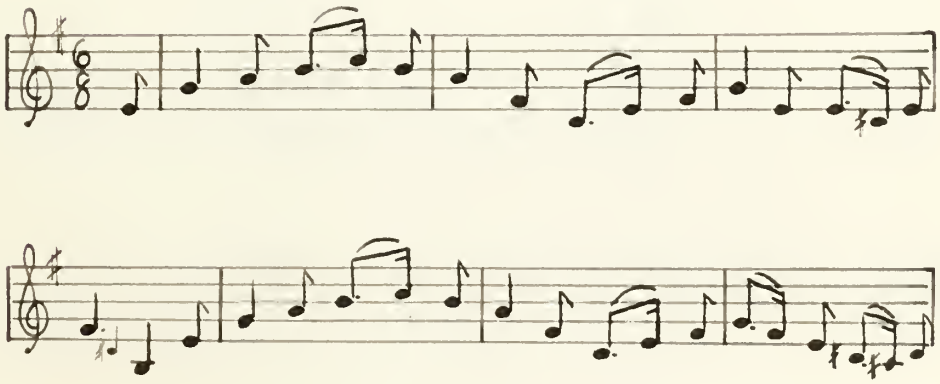
[5] Ibid., p. 128



[6]

The carol, "What Child is This?" was originally this charming old English love-song:

My Lady Greensleeves



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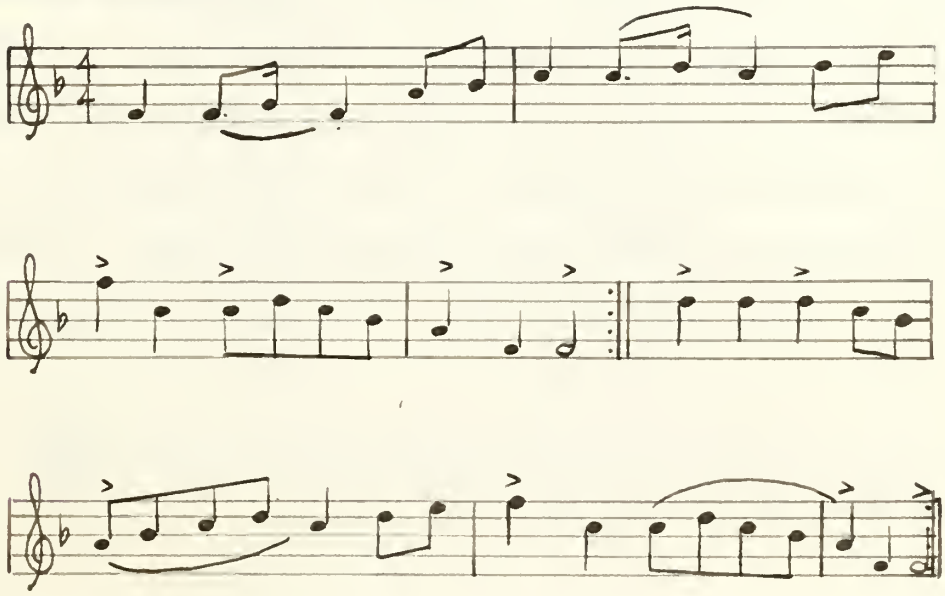
[6] Stainer, Sir John, Carols, English and Foreign, (The Musical Times,) p. 787

"Alas! my love you do me wrong
  To cast me off discourteously,
For I have loved you so long,
  Delighting in your company.

Greensleeves was all my joy,
  Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
  And all for my lady Greensleeves."[7]

As the carol was primarily associated with dancing, it was only natural that much of the music should be of the nature of dance tunes. The Furry-day Song for May Day was distinctly such:



[8]

All the carols sung around the Christmas crib that was set up at the altar of the Church were dance tunes, especially those originating in Italy, France, Germany, and Middle

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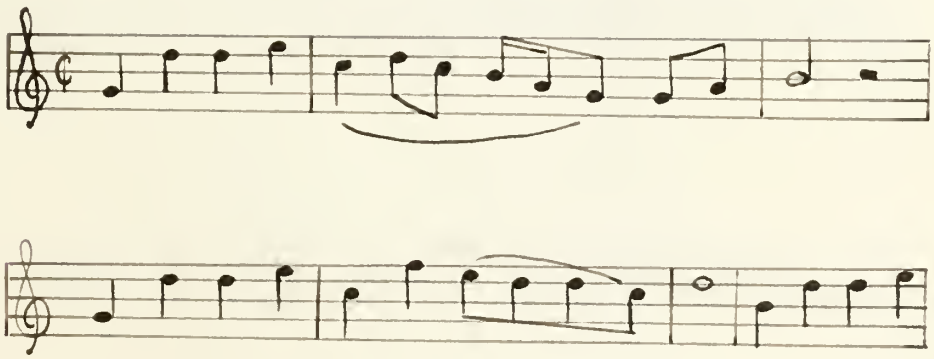
[7] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 127

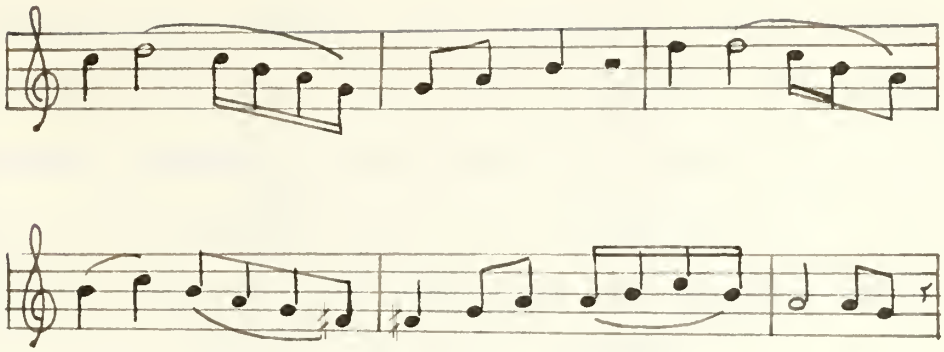
[8] Ibid., p. 129

Europe. The universally known song, "Adeste Fideles", is now considered by authorities to be one of the old Latin carols danced and sung around the "praesepium." [9]

It is quite probable that certain lyrics and music were composed by the wandering minstrels of Europe. Such men took an active part in the popular "ludi", whence many carols of a more secular nature arose. The minstrels also assisted in the church dramas; hence it is likely they influenced carolry to a degree. Of these singers, France had her troubadours and trouveres; Germany, her minnesingers and meistersingers; and England, her gleemen and gleewomen. One and all exalted life through music, and at the Christmas season the Virgin Mary and her Son must have shared richly in praise. The following Christmas carol is thought to be of troubadour origin in the Thirteenth Century:

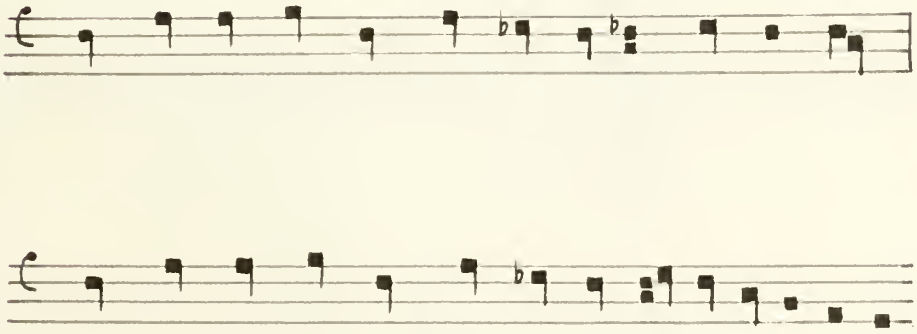


[9] Oberndorfer, Marx and Anne, Noëls, p. 13



"Bone gent, pour qui sauvement
Dieu de char vestir se daigna,
Et en bercheul vit humlement;
Qui tout le monde en sa main a.
Rendons li graces douchement,
Qui si bien en sa vie ouvra;
Et pour nostre vacatement,
Jusca la mort s'umilia.
Lectio Epistolae.
Beati Pauli Apostoli, ad Titum
Saint Paus envoie chest ditie." [10]

This specimen is ascribed to a minnesinger:



[11]

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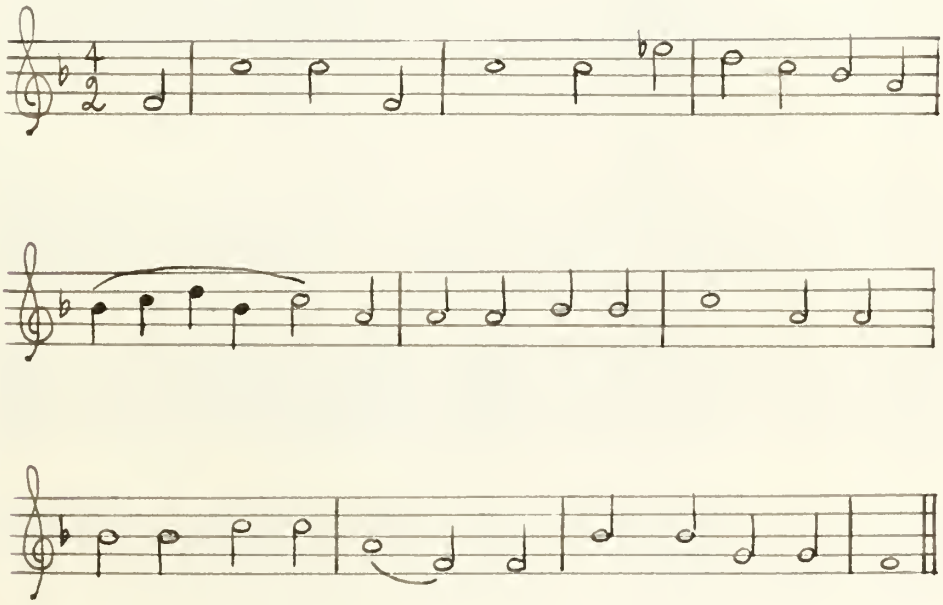
[10] Duncan, E., The Story of the Carol, p. 47
[11] Ibid., p. 46

Duncan says, "Their music appears to have had its origin in the old Reigen, or dance tunes, though it has been significantly ascribed to the Sequentia....Amongst the large numbers of Minnelieder which have been preserved in neumatic and church notation, few bear upon our subject, though doubtless many must have at one time existed." [12]

In the Fifteenth Century the Meistersingers took the place of the Minnesingers. Hans Sach, poet, cobbler, and philosopher was a notable member of this group. The following example is a May carol, an old minnesong arranged by him:



[13]

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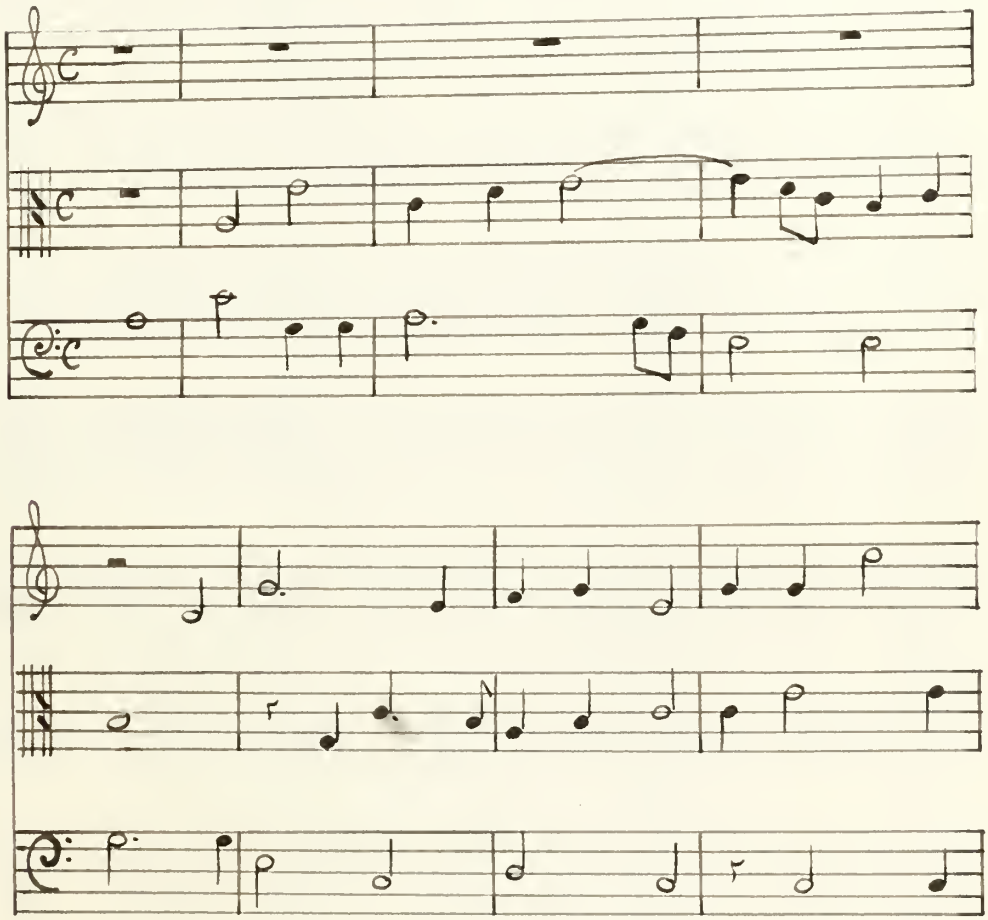
[12] Ibid., p. 46
[13] Ibid., p. 70

With the rise of contrapuntal music in the Sixteenth Century, a new form of carol grew up after the nature of the motet. There are a number of interesting examples from among the early musicians, Marbeck, Du Caurroy, Byrd, and Sweelinck. The following carol is by Marbeck:

A Virgin and Mother

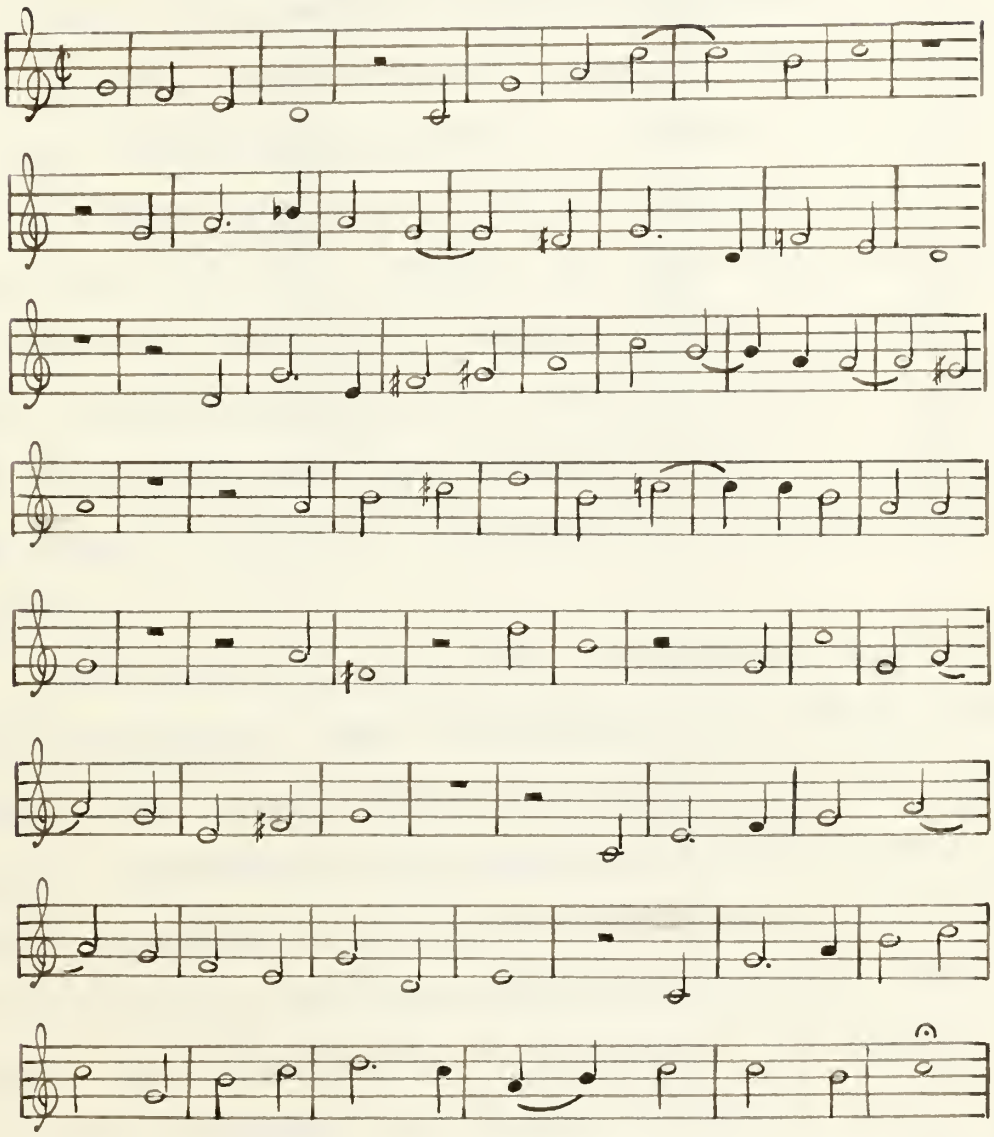


[14]

[14] Ibid., 89

Another example is by Byrd. This is a very beautiful five-part composition. The melody is:

A Carowle For Christmas Day



[15]

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[15] Ibid., pp. 91-92

Concerning the accompaniment, carols were sung mostly in unison and a cappella. However, it was not infrequent for strolling carolers to take stringed instruments with them, such as, guitars, viols, banjos, et cetera. In Spain, the singing and dancing were always accompanied by castanets. Spanish rhythm would be incomplete without the click of these fascinating instruments. Bagpipes were used by the shepherds, making a strange yet beautiful sound as heard over the hills. Indeed, the carol being primarily a song of the open, any instrument that was convenient to carry served the purpose of a troop of singers. In the churches, carols were sung generally without accompaniment. The organ was added only occasionally to complete the ensemble.

This chapter has given but a fleeting glimpse of the music of carolry. From the content, it is evident this phase of the subject alone would require the most intensive study - searching for the evolution in Church tunes, the use of folksongs in various countries, the melodies of early minstrels, and later composers of a more formal style. The field is very far-reaching. Its greatest significance, perhaps, is in showing how much a part of the common life of the people the carol may become, singing its way into all hearts, both of the high and low. The keynote is exuberant mirth and joy. It is simple and

sincere music that can be easily understood and enjoyed. Above all, it is supremely healthy and refreshing, and touches a merry note that makes the world more glad with singing.

CHAPTER V

THE REVIVAL OF CAROLRY IN MODERN TIMES

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The study of carolry cannot be brought to a close without a brief consideration of its revival in modern times. The awakening came about the middle of the Ninteenth Century, notably in England. This was coincident with the finding of the rare Swedish book, Piae Cantiones, by the Rev. J. M. Neale and Rev. T. Helmore, English editors, who were so charmed with the exquisite carol tunes, that they published in 1853 Twelve Carols for Christmastide. The music and verses were all from this old book. The following year they published a companion volume, Twelve Carols for Eastertide. This marked the actual beginning of the revival in England. Later, in 1871 Bramley and Stainer published forty-two Christmas Carols Old and New. A general interest was manifest from now on. Carols were introduced into Church services at Christmas and Easter; and by the last quarter of the Ninteenth Century carol-singing became thoroughly popular. Soon there was an effort to regain the lovely folk music of the land. Cecil Sharpe made a valuable contribution in this field by recovering

many delightful carols of folksong character.[1] The significance of the movement was very great, since it marked a return to carolry in the true spirit for the popular celebration of religious festivals.

Overtones of this revival were heard in America. Boston was the birthplace of carol-singing that became a part of the community life, both religious and secular. By the middle of the century, carols were gradually introduced into the churches. In 1859 the Church of the Advent held a "Choir Christmas Eve", and following the service, the choir boys were taken to Harvard Square in Cambridge to serenade the Rev. Dan Huntington. King's Chapel introduced carol-singing very early in vesper services held at Christmas and Easter for the children of the parish. Later, Christmas Eve carol services were established at the chapel and have become a beautiful tradition of this church as well as many other churches throughout Boston and the country at large. In this way a wealth of lovely music has been restored to the people.

Furthermore, there is a revival of interest in dramatic ritual within the Church. Dramatized carols are frequently introduced into children's services especially, and when used as an intimate part of the liturgy, become

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[1] Dearmer, Vaughan, and Shaw, The Oxford Carol Book, pp. xvi-xviii.

as overtones of the early tropes that made more vivid the message of Christmas and Easter. Mystery plays, also have become popular once more, and with these, carols should rightfully have an important place.

Boston has become famous, likewise, for introducing carolry into the secular life of the people. Customs of caroling in the streets, candle-lighting, and bell-ringing have been incorporated into the folkways of the day. The illumination of windows on Christmas Eve was started by Mr. Nicholas Reggio at 1 Commonwealth Avenue in the late 1860's. As early as 1893 there were occasional lighted windows on Beacon Hill; and in 1908 Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Adams Cram started the custom of organized neighborhood illumination. Since that time the Hill each year has been a blaze of glory on Christmas Eve, a most unique and beautiful custom of the season that is shared by all.

Caroling in the streets of Boston began in 1892 when a group of children from the Church of the Disciples went to sing before the door of Rev. Charles G. Ames on West Cedar Street. In 1907, a group of people assembled at Mr. Cram's home were inspired to go out to sing spontaneously. They knew only one song from memory, "Adeste Fideles", which they sang over and over through the streets! The next year the custom of organized caroling was started and has grown to remarkable proportions in recent years.

Still another custom took root, that of hand-bell ringing which began in 1925. This lends an added charm to the general celebration, bringing a quaint touch of the Old World. [2]

As yet, a similar interest in Easter Eve caroling has not manifested itself in America, as enjoyed in Europe. However, Spring and Easter carols are sung frequently in the churches, and perhaps in time will play a more important part in the communal life of the people.

A natural outcome of this revival in carolry has been in the writing of new lyrics and music. In England, such poets as William Morris, Christina Rossetti, Swinburne, and Chesterton have attempted to produce carols in the Mediaeval style, and often with very pleasing results. The following is a charming verse from Swinburne:

"Three damsels in the Queen's chamber,
The Queen's mouth was most fair,
She spake a word of God's mother
As the comb went in her hair.
Mary that is of might,
Bring us to thy Son's sight." [3]

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[2] Chamberlain, Allen, Old-Time New England, Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, pp. 70-73

[3] Phillips, W. J., Carols, Their Origin, Music and Connection with Mystery Plays, p. 11

And another by Chesterton:

"The thatch of the roof was as golden
Though dusty the straw was and old;
The wind had a peal as of trumpets,
Though blowing and barren and cold.
The mother's hair was a glory,
Though loosened and torn;
For under the eaves in the gloaming
A child was born." [4]

Christina Rossetti has written many delightful carols for Christmas and Easter both. The following verses are taken from "An Easter Carol," set to music by Geoffrey Shaw:

"Winter is past,
Sweet Spring is come at last, is come at last.

. . . . .

All Herds and Flocks
Rejoice, all beasts of thickets and of rocks.

Sing, Creatures, sing,
Angels and Men and Birds and everything." [5]

Among the musicians of England, Gustav Holst, Martin and Geoffrey Shaw, and Vaughn Williams have written beautiful tunes for carols both new and old. Holst, for example, has made lovely settings for "Midwinter" by Rossetti, and "Lully my Liking" of the Fifteenth Century; Shaw, for the rare old lyric, "I sing of a maiden," and Vaughn Williams, "Snow in the Street" by Morris.

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[4] Miles, C. A., Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, pp. 85-86
[5] Schauffler, Robert H., Editor, Easter, Its History and Celebration, pp. 41-42

In America, also, there are some delightful examples. Perhaps, Phillips Brooks' "O Little Town of Bethlehem" is the most universally known and loved Christmas carol. Osbert W. Warmingham has written a number of charming carols. The following specimen brings an entirely new and exquisite thought of the Christ Child coming amid the flowers:

Christmas in May

"It must have been in the month of May
   Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
That Christ was born, O Happy day!
   Sing In Excelsis Gloria!
For shepherds in the fields so bright
   Did watch their flocks by day and night
When angel hosts in rapture-light
   Sang In Excelsis Gloria!

   Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
   Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
      Peace on earth!
      Goodwill to men!
   Sing Gloria, Sing Gloria!
   Sing Gloria, Sing Gloria!
      In Excelsis Gloria!

Not in the stress of a winter cold
   Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
Did Wise Men visit Him of old;
   Sing In Excelsis Gloria!
But following a starry light
   That led through fields with May bedight
They found Him then, O wondrous sight!
   Sing In Excelsis Gloria!

They shone, those stars of the Eastern skies!
   Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
But could not shine as Mary's eyes!
   Sing In Excelsis Gloria!
And all the songs of angels fair
   Were not as rare as the quiet prayer
Of joy, that flooded Mary there!
   Sing In Excelsis Gloria!

And all the gifts that the Wise Men brought,
Sing Nowell, Sing Gloria!
By fortune won, or wisdom wrought,
Sing In Excelsis Gloria!
Did pale before Him, every one,
As pale the stars before the sun!
For God gave us His Matchless Son!
Sing In Excelsis Gloria!" [6]

American musicians appear to be especially interested in restoring all the lovely old carols of the earlier centuries, and are prolific in arranging beautiful traditional melodies to be sung by choirs and lay folk throughout the country. Only a few have ventured to compose new tunes and of these, Francis Snow and Mabel Daniels are among the best known.

From all such tendencies, it may be seen that the present day marks the beginning of another great revival in carolry, manifesting itself through the religious and social customs of the people. Furthermore, it marks a revival among poets and musicians who are seeking to express a new beauty which will reflect in part, at least, the rare charm and sincerity of the Golden Age.

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[6] Warmingham, Osbert W., Flutes of Summer, p. 15

SUMMARY

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In the foregoing pages the beginnings of carolry have been traced to primitive rites and mysteries, and also to the religious festivals celebrating new life, common to all ancient cultures in the East. Dancing rites and song accompanied such celebrations, and herein, it is believed, was the first impulse to carolry.

Among the Egyptians, especially, there was a custom of caroling without words, like birds. This was adopted by the Greeks and later by the Christian Church. There it continued to exist in the florid chants of the Roman liturgy from which the sequences arose and subsequently, one form of the Mediaeval carol. In the Spring festivals of Greece, celebrating the birth of the god Dionysus, there were songs and dances of new birth, called Dithyrambs. In the example cited from a Delphic inscription, it would appear that they had a remarkable similarity to the Christmas carol, with its dance and mirth. Through the assimilation of pagan customs into Christian civilization, the Early Christians from the beginning employed rhythm and music in festival celebrations; and it is likely that carolry played a part, though there is no positive record extant.

The word, "carol", itself means "dance", and is derived

from the Greek root, "chor". Christian poets and painters for centuries were among those who testified to such an understanding of the word. This suggests a distinctive carol form, and a character that is at once exuberant and joyful.

Through the Dark Ages, the spirit of carolry was lost due to the increasing austerity of the Christian religion. It arose anew in the Mediaeval period through Church ritual and folk drama. The beginnings were in the sequences associated with dramatic ritual introduced into the liturgy. Out of such ritual the Mystery Plays evolved in which carols held an important place.

Another impulse to carolry in this period was through folk drama derived from pagan rites, and now used for the festive celebrations of the people. The minstrels of Europe took an active part in such pantomimic merrymakings, and were doubtless the writers of many of the more secular carols. One form of folk drama was allowed in the Church, usually on New Year's Eve. It was known as the Feast of Fools or Feast of the Ass. Such celebrations were very riotous, and in them the most extraordinary burlesque carols were introduced.

The new movement of Humanism with its great exponent, St. Francis of Assisi, marked the actual flowering of Christian carolry. The Italian saint brought to religion

a new tenderness and human quality which served as the inspiration for a rare lyrical beauty. By popularizing the Christmas crêche for homes and churches, St. Francis gave a new understanding to Christmas; and, beginning in the Thirteenth Century, exquisite carols of the Nativity were written by numerous poets throughout Europe. The keynote was, "Be glad and laugh and sing."

From now on carolry and dramatic expression were a joyous experience in the life of the people. Mystery plays were completely emancipated from the Church and popularized religion and carolry to a remarkable degree. In England, especially, the four great cycles of Collective Mysteries were an important part of the communal life. Carols were inseparable from them at first, but later won the ascendancy as an independent form which was destined to reach its zenith in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.

This period marked the Golden Age of carolry. The most beautiful lyrics of both a religious and festive character were written everywhere. Christmas was the favorite theme, with its songs of the Virgin, the Nativity, lullabies, shepherds, kings, legends, and customs. There were delightful springtime carols, also, exalting the wonders of the resurrection in man and nature. Spring carols of the May, likewise, sang the same joyous theme of new life. The music was equally interesting, and of the greatest charm

and variety. The carol was not set to a "proper" tune. Sometimes it was to a Church melody or folk-tune, dance, or composed tune from the early music of minstrelsy, or the later contrapuntal school. It was primarily a song for the open and could be sung to the accompaniment of any convenient instrument, or, as was usually the case, with voices alone.

Again, the spirit of carolry was lost beginning in the middle of the Seventeenth Century. This time it was due to the rise of Puritanism in England, and the growing interest in the new contrapuntal music throughout Europe. By the middle of the Ninteenth Century, however, there was another awakening, especially in England. America caught the spirit, also, until to-day on both sides of the Atlantic there is a most promising revival. Poets and musicians alike are trying to regain the freshness and charm that characterized the Golden Age. Dramatic action, likewise, is being associated with carolry once more; and interesting customs are developing in the folkways of the people.

Thus history repeats itself. It testifies throughout the ages that man ever carols forth his joy in the celebration of new life. The spirit cannot die. It may lie dormant at times, as this study has revealed, but ultimately finds utterance in refreshing songs of gladness and mirth - in joyful response to the Mystery in which all life has its being.

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